

HIS CHILDREN'S CHILDREN

BY ARTHUR TRAIN

NOVELS

HIS CHILDREN'S CHILDREN

THE GOLDFISH

THE EARTHQUAKE

**L'AMÉRIQUE ET LA SECOUSSE DE LA
GUERRE. FRENCH EDITION OF ABOVE
[HACHETTE ET CIE.]**

AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING

THE WORLD AND THOMAS KELLY

THE HERMIT OF TURKEY HOLLOW

THE ADVENTURES OF ARTEMAS QUIBBLE

THE BUTLER'S STORY

"C. Q."

STORIES

TUTT AND MR. TUTT

BY ADVICE OF COUNSEL

TRUE STORIES OF CRIME

MC ALLISTER AND HIS DOUBLE

MORTMAIN

ESSAYS

THE PRISONER AT THE BAR

COURTS, CRIMINALS, AND THE CAMORRA

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By
ARTHUR TRAIN

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

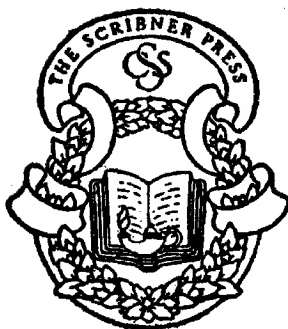
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CHAPTER I

STRONG MEN

THE clock on Trinity Church pointed to half-past four. Rufus Kayne glanced up from the letter at which he was scowling, observed the lateness of the hour and pressed a pearl button upon the desk beside him. He had not noticed the swift fading of the November afternoon, for he worked in an artificial glare. The light which beats upon the president of a trust company rivals that which in past days was said to beat upon a throne.

A young woman answered the bell, note-book in hand.

"If anything important comes up," said Kayne without removing the cigar from his mouth, "you can get me at Mr. Pepperill's office, and after that at the Corner Store Club. By the way, how are my daughters' accounts?"

"Miss Diana is overdrawn thirty-five hundred dollars," replied the secretary. "Miss Sheila only six hundred."

"Tell the cashier to write each of them a stiff letter," directed Kayne. "But transfer enough from my account to make the overdrafts good." He crumpled the letter he had been reading into his pocket. The writer—his other daughter, Claudia—was, luckily for him, not in a position to overdraw. He had closed her ac-

count because her husband was a blackguard. He got up and put on his coat and hat.

"Well, that's all, I guess. Good night!"

He descended in the private elevator—sacred to the use of the more exalted of the company's officers—to the great marble entrance hall below, gaudy as a hotel, brilliant with giant clusters of electric globes held aloft by bronze stands like bunches of incandescent toy balloons. The place resembled a railroad station. A pleasing sense of his power came over him as he watched the multitude of clerks at the bronze grills, the rows of grave officials at their desks. The doorman held back the crowd for him to pass. Like royalty he emerged into Broadway. A few moments later he was being similarly ushered into the offices of Crutchfield & Pepperill, his attorneys.

Rufus Kayne was a certain sort of gentleman. The crease in his trousers was very marked; for the generation to which he belonged regarded elegance of exterior as the *sine qua non* of respectability, and after "the public be damned" epoch there were few circles so ostentatiously, even painfully, respectable as the upper crust of New York society. The "high financiers" of the '70's and '80's were all distinguished for their philanthropy and tall hats. Dick Turpin's grandson doubtless passed the plate on Sundays. So it was with the offspring of old Peter Kayne, "the Pirate"—Rufus's father—and of the other freebooters of the last century.

These founders of some of our best families had been a cutthroat gang who gave neither themselves nor the public any quarter and who slaughtered the lambs in uncounted flocks until Wall Street ran with blood. The lambs had no business to be in Wall Street, and any one who sat in the game took his chance of becoming a mil-

lionaire—the word in those days savored of “gold, and silver, ivory and apes, and peacocks”—or a pauper overnight. He also ran the risk of having his pockets picked, his studs removed, his ears slit, and his heart cut out—while he was watching his adversary’s draw. They were—those old-timers—a husky brood of self-confessed rascals who chewed tobacco, smoked raw cigars, ate and drank prodigiously, swore big round oaths and drove fast horses—highwaymen who had held up the stage and were now sitting on the box. Unscrupulous and cruel in business matters, they were otherwise amiable, and, having made their piles, immediately set about establishing themselves properly upon the social ladder.

Here the fickleness of fortune showed itself, for, while some had not the slightest difficulty in climbing to the top, others, equally wealthy, for no tangible reason never got their feet off the ground. Generically they were the same crew that fought over the possession of the copper-mines, the street railroads, and the insurance companies. Many of their children to-day are received in the very best society, and beyond peradventure all of their grandchildren will be.

Rufus himself had been among the fortunate ones. None had been less respectable than his father, and none was now more so than he. In some measure he had achieved this by associating both in business and society only with those of impeccable antecedents and position, of whom by no means the least distinguished was Mr. Vincent Pepperill, his lawyer.

Mr. Pepperill, like most native New Yorkers, had been born elsewhere, but he had lived in Washington Square for over half a century and the firm of Crutchfield & Pepperill—although there was no longer any Crutchfield and had not been for a generation—was a legal

institution. Officials, without knowing exactly why, did things for Crutchfield & Pepperill that they did for nobody else, and the power of Mr. Pepperill—although he was a delicate, slender old man with tiny bones and a small birdlike head—was far-reaching. He now leaned back in his swivel chair before a sea-coal fire regarding somewhat superciliously the tall figure of his client who sat on the other side of the desk, his broad shoulders stiffly erect, his deep chest giving an impression of being expanded slightly above the normal.

“At any rate,” the lawyer now declared, “something should be done about her.” He tapped his fingertips together with a delicate air, for he liked to drive the team of destiny with a rein of gossamer. “She must not be left alone over there in England to her own devices any longer!”

He spoke severely—with a touch of huskiness in his high old voice—in the manner he habitually used, inevitably suggesting that his clients were to blame for whatever difficulties they found themselves in, which was indeed the case in the present instance.

Rufus Kayne felt uneasily in his waistcoat pocket for a cigar. His sallow face was too wide between the cheek bones, but his gray eyes were keen, his forehead high and impressive.

“Claudia certainly has made a mess of it!” he said. “I had another letter from her this afternoon.”

Had he not been conferring with Mr. Pepperill he would have used stronger language, but there was an austerity about the aristocratic and somewhat condescending old lawyer which had a subduing effect upon his more careless use of the vernacular, and made him feel, when in his presence, somewhat like a schoolboy summoned to the principal's office. Of this Mr. Pep-

perill was fully aware and from it he drew satisfaction, since, on the whole, he rather enjoyed patronizing the Kaynes and directing their affairs.

"Don't blame the poor child too much," replied the lawyer. "Harrowdale deceived everybody. I had the fellow up to dinner myself. He had letters from some of the best people in England."

"Who were no doubt glad to ship him over here to get rid of him," growled his client. "It was his uniform caught her. Put a bit of red flannel on a lapel and any woman will jump at it like a bullfrog." He laughed grimly.

"Where is Lady Harrowdale now?" inquired Mr. Pepperill with a trace of irony.

"Down in Surrey. The place stands in her name."

"You are lucky not to have made any settlement on him. Most of these fortune-hunters insist on it."

"It may have put him off her at that," returned Kayne. "Perhaps he doesn't like enforced domesticity as a condition to sharing his wife's income. I ought to have known he was a rotter by his manner."

"Oh, you can't always tell by that!" answered his adviser. "What a shame he couldn't behave himself! At any rate, she wants to come home and naturally to bring her children along with her. The question is how to go about it."

"I suppose they're her children as much as his," hazarded Kayne.

"Not in England," grumbled Mr. Pepperill. "That's the trouble. If once we could get them over here there'd be no difficulty whatever. No American court would surrender them to him under any circumstances as long as she was alive. We could show him up easily enough. He'd never have the nerve even to try to get them; I'm

confident of that. But they're not here—they're over there!"

"Can't she fight it out in the English courts?"

"She can fight all she wants, but she won't get anywhere. She can't get a divorce—she hasn't the requisite legal grounds. Mere adultery on the part of a husband isn't sufficient in England. There must be 'cruelty' as well. Whatever else he may have done, Harrowdale's never been guilty of cruelty in the technical sense, and he's never in fact absolutely deserted her."

"No," agreed Kayne bitterly. "He just makes her life a hell by openly amusing himself with other women. What a farce the English divorce law is!"

"I'm afraid you'll have to buy him off!" averred the attorney. "After all, as we were just saying, you didn't make any settlement on him to begin with, and your daughter's liberty is worth something——"

"He'll never get a cent of my money!" retorted Kayne hotly. "I'll go over myself first and take her away by force if necessary."

"Rubbish!" returned Mr. Pepperill with impatience. "Don't talk nonsense. The first thing you knew you'd be in jail. Harrowdale's got clever counsel—and he's acting strictly according to their advice. Samuels & Samuels—I know 'em well—have retained them myself in important matters. They've put those children in Chancery and she can't take them out of England without making herself liable to imprisonment for contempt. And there you are!"

"My grandchildren 'in Chancery'? How do you mean?" demanded his client, scowling.

Mr. Pepperill uncrossed his legs and crossed them again the other way. From a legal point of view it was an interesting case.

"Merely that old Samuels has deposited fifty pounds sterling to the credit of each of the children, which—technically—places them under the control of the Lord Chancellor. His permission must be procured before they can be taken out of his jurisdiction. And of course he wouldn't give it if their father objected."

"Doesn't a mother have any rights in England?" demanded Kayne.

"None worth mentioning. At any rate, your son-in-law has been clever enough to clap a lien down on the children, and now he'll make your daughter Claudia's life desperate in the hope that some time or other you'll be willing to pay his price to lift it."

Kayne's face darkened.

"It looks as if he had a strangle hold on her! I suppose, though, if she gets over here we can get her some kind of a divorce?"

"Divorce? Certainly not—that is, not one that would be worth anything. It would reflect on all of you."

"Do you really think," challenged Kayne, "that to-day anybody cares two cents about divorce or anything else?"

Mr. Pepperill did not conceal his disapproval. What Kayne had said slurred indirectly everything that he held most sacred. It was an insult to the permanent order of things.

The old lawyer had the irascible and violent pessimism incident to his gout, and—in common with thousands of other equally crotchety persons—was accustomed to declare that the world was going to the dogs, and that nobody any longer had any reverence for anything,—but he did not believe it. He belonged to a generation that in spite of the fact that it had choked indignantly over the Darwinian Theory, had yet after an

acute spiritual indigestion successfully ingurgitated it, although recalling the process with no pleasure. He regarded the church's survival and apparent recovery as proof positive of its permanence. It was there and always would be there, in spite of golf, moral laxity, scepticism, or plain indifference—of the existence of all of which he was acutely aware.

He had been greatly depressed during the war; but he had never had the slightest doubt as to its outcome or conceived the possibility of a social overturn afterward. Others might believe constitutional government—civilization even—to be trembling in the balance and the whole world, like a house of cards, on the verge of going Bolshevik—Russia toppling over Poland, Poland collapsing Republican Germany—then France—then England—and then what, by George! can save us? But not he!

The world had justified his confidence. It had repudiated Lenine and Trotzky and all their works. No communist—hardly a socialist—dared peep. The rocking universe was solidly on its bottom again. There was a Republican President in the White House, the coal and railroad strikes had proved failures. God was in His Heaven, all was fundamentally right with the world. Mr. Pepperill's anchors were all holding. His good old order was rapidly coming back to its own—Church, State, and Society. And perhaps the greatest of these was Society—the Society of the best people, of the conservative element who owned the pews in St. Timothy's, the stock in the older banking-houses, the big blocks of realty in lower New York, and who somehow still quietly ran things. To be indifferent to their approval—to challenge their opinion—was an admission of vulgarity or even worse. Mr. Pepperill felt that a man with less

remote claims to gentility would not have made such a remark. Therefore he compressed his thin lips and, looking at Kayne severely, said:

"I don't know what kind of people you have in mind, but my own friends certainly have not changed their standards and"—he hesitated pointedly—"they still seem to have some influence."

Rufus Kayne perceived that he had been rebuked. He had no desire to be exiled from the lawyer's esteem, even if the latter was an old fogey.

"Oh," he hastened to explain, "I didn't mean exactly that; only people nowadays seem to take that kind of thing a good deal more easily than they used to."

"The right sort don't—the people who make sound public opinion—like the Grahams, for example. I've been all through this business, my dear sir—again and again, and there are very few who go into it that don't suffer. Among the people who count there is exactly the same underlying feeling about divorce to-day as there was thirty—even forty—years ago. You can't shake the solid foundation of American morals. However, a couple of hundred thousand dollars would no doubt induce Sir Percy to give your daughter the evidence upon which the courts would grant her a decree. It's done every day over there—just as it is here."

He tapped with his fingers impatiently upon his desk.

"Well! Think it over!"

There was dismissal in his tone. His client arose. He felt a lack of sympathy in the old lawyer's attitude.

"I shan't pay a cent!" he repeated stubbornly. "But I don't want to bother you. Your time is too valuable."

Isn't there some young man in your office that I can take it up with? I might want to do something"—he smiled slyly—"that isn't quite respectable—that the best people wouldn't approve of!"

The same thought had flashed through Mr. Pepperill's own mind. He was a little tired of Kayne. The fellow was getting bumptious— As for his wife!

"Not a bad idea!" he readily assented. He pressed a button, and a page boy appeared at the door. "Ask Mr. Maitland to step in here for a moment if he's not busy," said Mr. Pepperill. The boy nodded and disappeared. "Maitland's a very capable fellow, I had him here eight years, before the war, and now that it's over he's come back. I've made him a junior partner. You'll find him all right. Ah! There he is now. Mr. Kayne—this is Mr. Maitland. You can tell him your troubles."

Rufus Kayne saw advancing toward him a tall, rather bony youth, with gentle brown eyes and a singularly attractive wide-angle smile, in which modesty was combined with quiet determination. His curly hair, which was the same color as his eyes, grew into a sort of peak in the centre of his forehead, and his complexion was of that dusty brown with a touch of red-grape bloom so often found among plainsmen. His bearing was at once deferential and self-reliant, and his attitude toward the banker partook of that of a younger officer addressing an older one.

"We might go into my room, if you don't mind," he suggested, and Mr. Pepperill shook hands with Mr. Kayne.

"Remember me to your wife," said the lawyer. "You must both give me the pleasure of your company at dinner soon. And thank her for the invitation to your

daughter Sheila's coming-out party—when is it, by the way?"

"Friday of next week," replied Kayne.

"My commiserations," remarked Mr. Pepperill dryly.

"Good night."

CHAPTER II

THE LAODICEAN

THE rise of the Kaynes had been neither more rapid nor more spectacular than that of many another of our first New York families. As late as the year 1867 Peter B., its founder—then twenty-six years of age, and still sound after two years in Libby Prison—had been wielding a pick and carrying a dinner-pail on the upper Merced in the company of his friend Billy McGaw.

Five years—during which he and Billy had wandered the length of California and Nevada—and he had struck it rich by bidding in an abandoned mine which instinct had told him was still unexhausted. Then while his luck was strong he had hastened on to Virginia City and had cleaned up a million or so with Flood, Fair, and O'Brien, and then after roaring around the globe in yachts and private cars in the company of select parties of ladies invited from Butte and Denver for their charm of face and figure, had at length become bored with the whole damn business, and returned East to enter the game of "Bet-you-a-railroad." With him, on his coat-tails, came Billy McGaw—unchanged from the days of the upper Merced.

Ten years more and he had smashed two systems beyond recovery, and incidentally had gilded the edges of the securities of three others previously almost worthless. In this way he had drawn public attention to the value of the investment and stimulated railroad-building. People forgot about the roads he had put into bank-

ruptcy, and thought of him only as a financier. The rumors—once common enough gossip—about the “Zaragoza” and the “Aphrodite,” with their painted guests, faded from official memory.

Then the directors of a certain hospital published a benefaction in the form of a half-million-dollar endowment to be known as “The Peter B. Kayne Orthopædic Wing,” a commodious house was built on the then upper reaches of Fifth Avenue, and the family rented a pew in the Madison Avenue Methodist Church. This last, proving an obvious social error, they gradually and unostentatiously withdrew, Rufus and his sister Bridget transferring their allegiance to St. Timothy’s, to which they presented a reredos of surpassing beauty in memory of their mother, and James affiliating himself with the somewhat less fashionable but none the less respectable synod of the Marble Presbyterian Church on Thirty-fourth Street.

James and his wife, although Presbyterians, had pronounced social ambitions and, accordingly, while jealous of the Rufuses, made a point of more or less keeping up with them; while Bridget, their only sister, who had married a dyspeptic and who in consequence spent most of her time with him at various salt and hot sanitariums when in her native country, and at a similar collection of *bad*s, *bain*s, and hydros when the state of the world permitted her to go abroad, was always, between times, at the house of “my brother, Mr. Rufus Kayne,” the relationship constituting in her opinion her chief social asset. But there could hardly be said to be much family feeling, and the Rufuses and the Jameses had been known to stay at different hotels in Paris contemporaneously for several weeks without going to see one another. This preference for standing upon their own feet may have

had its origin in a suspicion that the less there was made of the family the better, and that it would not do to let the world suppose for one instant that they needed any mutual support.

They all were, still, it must be confessed, just a little sensitive about their antecedents, and preferred to go it alone rather than run any risk of inconvenient family intimacies. Things were well enough—let them be. Needless to say, the fact that they had originally lived in Brooklyn—"the Heights—not the Hill!"—was never mentioned, although Brooklyn had been at the time socially quite impeccable. The embarrassment lay in the fact that during the same period old Peter had owned the "Zarazota."

It is doubtful if either Uncle James or Aunt Bridget would have admitted their prehistoric association with the place or acknowledged that they knew how to get there. Yet the Kayne plot in Greenwood was one of the most magnificent in the cemetery, commanding a beautiful view of the neighboring outskirts of Flatbush, and adorned with a polished pink monument in the best possible taste marked

K A Y N E

in raised letters of great size and dignity. Eventually they would all go back there whether they wanted to or not.

They all showed an astonishing lack of pride in the wide-spread culinary reputation, especially for cookies, doughnuts, and apple turnovers, enjoyed by their mother in an era when "piazza parties" were fashionable and it was quite the thing for whole families to sit on the

front steps together on summer evenings calling across mild witticisms to their neighbors on the opposite side of the street, or even humming sentimental melodies to Bridget's—the present Mrs. Mallory's—ivory-inlaid guitar, which she had discarded long years ago for the far more convenient pianola with its unlimited repertory. Had it not been for the tintype secretly preserved in a cherished album it would have been impossible to associate her with a guitar, even with one inlaid with ivory. Yet Rufus, clad in a red-and-black flannel blazer with three-inch stripes, had once innocently sung to it on Remsen Street, strumming a lopsided tennis racket and twisting imaginary mustachios to the childish delight of Bridget and James.

“I’m Pierre de Bonton de Paree de Paree,
An’ I drink the divine odervee, odervee!
As I drive out each day in my leettle coupay
I tell you I’m something to see-e-e!”

Both Bridget and James forever after visualized the aristocracy of the Faubourg St. Germain as wearing red-and-black blazers, and taking the air in diminutive broughams.

It was a violent transition from the Remsen Street Rufus of the Polytechnic Institute to the Fifth Avenue Rufus of the Utopia Trust Company. Yale University and some three millions of dollars had both been of material assistance in consummating it.

No two characters are equally clear-cut. Old Peter Kayne was like a granite figure chiselled by nature on a mountainside—a man of energy and individuality who crushed his opponents by direct methods and had no sympathy with dissimulation; who laid his cards on the table, betting his high hands high and his low

hands low; brutally intolerant perhaps, but straight in his crookedness. Rufus endeavored to imitate his father's qualities, adopting a shortness of speech and a brusqueness of manner designed to convey the impression of force and frankness. But because he had no definite convictions, unless business policies can be called such, there was nothing really definite about him except his desire to get on. He was a good bluffer and talked confidently of art, music, and literature, of which he in fact knew little except what he remembered from a few "snap" courses at Yale. He read almost nothing except the daily papers, and an occasional review, yet he posed as a man of culture—rather "an intellectual" than otherwise—and could probably have defended his title satisfactorily enough for his own purposes. No one challenged it, however, for there was no one in his set capable of doing so. At a meeting of the board of trustees of the New York Public Library, of which, like Mr. Pepperill, he was a member, he could preside with all the dignity of a college president.

In one respect dogmatic theology had profoundly affected his life, although he would have been surprised to learn it. Rufus Kayne believed confidently in a kind of heaven to which years would give him right of access. While he had no faith in the creed which he professed, he was nevertheless unwilling to surrender the joys of the hereafter, and looked forward in lieu of it to a future period of compensating enjoyment here on earth.

So does almost every other American business man. Some time or other, when he has made his pile, when he reaches the age of fifty-five or sixty or sixty-five, when the children are all married, or the business is properly established, every man of Rufus Kayne's type expects to "lay off" and begin to have a good time. Then—

and apparently not until then—does he anticipate getting very much out of life. Then his stocks will all pay dividends, and he will begin to be repaid for his hard work. At that fair but far-distant day he purposes taking up golf, travelling round the world, reading history, and indulging that natural taste for all the arts which he confidently assumes is latent in his nature, and will burst into fragrant blossom at his call. Why does he imagine that the sun will shine more brightly than it does now, that Beethoven rather than Irving Berlin will then inthrall him, Walter Pater (if he has heard the name) rather than Ring Lardner and Irv Cobb, that his rather indifferent friends will experience a new burst of affection and come crowding about him, or that the young girls will find him any more attractive than they do to-day? Fatuous mirage of Mohammed's paradise! Bitter is the day of realization that the Goddess of Pleasure demands more persistent wooing than any other mistress!

Rufus Kayne took it for granted that he was a good husband and father, and that his home was of the kind referred to in the newspapers as "model" and "American," although apart from signing a check each month for the servants' wages he paid it no attention whatever. Intellectually, his wife Elizabeth was entirely unsympathetic to him. As for his two daughters who still remained at home, Diana, the elder, lived a life of her own, while Sheila, the younger, now about to make her début into society, had really been "out" since she was fifteen, her existence being composed of a continuous series of juvenile dances, dinner, theatre, and house parties in the winter, with the added delights in summer of picnics and wild excursions on land and water lasting half the night. Kayne himself was in

effect a stranger to the members of his family, who rarely since childhood had gathered around the hearth or reading-lamp for an evening, and none of whom ever knew which of the others was going to be home for dinner.

He also took it for granted that he was a patriotic and unselfish citizen. It was marvellous how many committees he belonged to, and how adept he was in organizing them, getting himself chosen chairman, and then turning the whole thing over to a hired secretary whose salary was the first charge on the funds collected. Sometimes unfortunately the funds only sufficed to pay for room rent, stationery, and the services of the professional uplift worker who usually assisted in Rufus Kayne's civic enterprises and made a very neat living out of them.

There his interest in his fellow men, his city, his native country and its flag, stopped. So long as stocks were strong and real-estate values soared his soul leaped with them in patriotic fervor. When they were down he sulked. About once a year his lithograph accompanied by a short but laudatory account of his achievements would appear in some magazine. In it he would be shown seated at his desk, an engraving of George Washington on the wall behind him, pondering deeply some problem of the moment, his nose, chin, and shoulders touched up just enough to give that effect of power, determination, and will so desirable in one of those leaders who make America what it is—and who at the same time make what they can out of America.

Sometimes when he felt the need of exercise, after a too heavy luncheon with some of his fellow directors, he would take a turn up Fourth Avenue in the neighborhood of Twenty-third Street, and find himself strug-

gling against the horde of dark-skinned, furtive-eyed foreigners who were pouring out of the lofts recently converted into sweat-shops. There were so many of them that it made him uneasy. Who were these hostile-looking thousands? Whence did they come? Would they overrun and devour America like a plague of locusts? Would they by virtue of expanding numbers take possession of the polls, the public offices, and the central government? What respect had they for American traditions? For the flag to which he scrupulously doffed his hat whenever he met it "carried in line"? These children of the proletariat and the revolution, who regarded the freedom of the Constitution as only one more new tyranny, would cut his throat in a moment—run a pike through his bourgeois belly—without a thought save for the glory of the new order. Aliens! who cared nothing for America save to exploit it, to make money out of it, and to propagate in it, strangling in their fierce individualism the native inhabitants who loved and cherished the land. With a shudder Kayne would turn into the nearest side street to avoid meeting those dangerous men so different from himself!

CHAPTER III

CLAUDIA'S AFFAIR

THIS was the man who followed his new adviser through the phalanx of desks in the outer office of Crutchfield & Pepperill's at which a dozen or so of very young men were ostentatiously engrossed, past a double row of rapid-firing typewriting machines, and into a cubicle that smelled strongly of pipe-tobacco. Beside a window opening into an interior court stood a small oak desk upon which lay a single bundle of papers, a package of cheap cigarettes, a card of matches, and a tin box of cut plug. Lloyd Maitland pulled a chair forward and offered it to the banker.

In his earlier years in the office and before joining the army he had often heard vaguely of Kayne as one of the "strong" men in Wall Street. As, however, the banker had become a client of Mr. Pepperill's only upon the formation of the Utopia Trust Company in 1917, Maitland had never before met him. Now he regarded him with interest since he had always pictured to himself men of that type as having something super-human about them or, at any rate, about their mentality. He was glad that they had it—they needed to have it—for he knew that, democracy or no democracy, such men controlled the destinies of the nation far more than public office-holders elected by the ballot. When a man like Kayne sent a telegram to the White House—he received an immediate answer. With his natural diffidence Maitland felt—at first—even more awe for Rufus Kayne than the latter felt for Mr. Pepperill.

"Please sit down," said he with a slightly embarrassed laugh. "This is the star-chamber!" Then perceiving Kayne's cigar he produced with evident relief a short pipe (which it appeared he had been carrying in his left hand all the while) and blew through it with a whistling sound.

"I don't pretend to be much of a lawyer," he remarked, as he refilled it elaborately after this natural vacuum-cleaning process, "and I'm afraid I can't be of much help to you, but you might explain your difficulty and I'll do the best I can."

The modesty of this introduction impressed Kayne favorably. From his experience most young men were assertive and overconfident. He did not realize to what an extent they modelled themselves upon their elders. But this chap, as he sat there sucking small hollows in his gaunt cheeks, looked, he thought, like a capable citizen. He might as well get on friendly terms with him at once. He had found most returned soldiers not averse to acknowledging their services. So with his accustomed diplomacy he said:

"Mr. Pepperill has told me that you were at the front. On what sector were you?"

But Maitland responded only vaguely.

"Oh, all over the lot," he answered. "Now about this affair of your daughter's——?"

And Kayne, in the calm, even tone that he used when addressing his board of directors, which suggested such weighty consideration and such an infinity of reserve, found himself recounting to Maitland the history of his daughter Claudia's unfortunate marriage to Sir Percy Harrowdale.

Nobody had been particularly to blame for it, he explained; for Harrowdale had appeared in every respect

an attractive and gentlemanly fellow—girls were half-hysterical at that age anyhow!—an exceptionally good-looking chap—with a supercilious air about him that was tremendously effective, particularly in dress uniform. It had been quite an affair—a military wedding—numerous officials on from Washington—and cables of congratulation from several distinguished members of the British peerage. The couple had returned to England, Harrowdale had resigned his commission in the Commissary or whatever it was, and they had bought a place in the country. Claudia had had two children—a girl first, then a boy, and for a while her letters had indicated entire happiness.

Then had come the inevitable change. Harrowdale had shown no intention of re-entering the army, as he had assured everybody that he would. He had demanded more money and she had given it to him and had then made application to her father to increase her allowance. The old story! Now Harrowdale was openly unfaithful to her and evidently trying—with the aid of a shrewd and unscrupulous pair of solicitors—to blackmail her family into buying him off. But he was going to be disappointed!

The banker's studied reserve vanished and he banged the table with his fist, his sallow cheeks taking on a ruddy tinge. Through this affair of Claudia's he had suffered his first setback at the hands of fate. Until then everything had gone well with him—in business and society.

"I beg your pardon!" muttered Maitland through his pipe, as he tilted back in his chair and nursed his left elbow with his right hand. "Didn't you look this fellow up—at *all*?"

Kayne shifted his eyes.

"There wasn't any particular need to. He was in DeBrett—and he had a captain's commission."

"In what branch of the service?" inquired Maitland. "Why wasn't he at the front?"

The banker shrugged his shoulders, while Maitland sucked on his pipe disgustedly and then emptied it on the window-sill.

"Some of those fellows who came over here were all right," he commented, "the ones who had been wounded, but a lot of them were just bounders whose people wanted to get rid of them. I don't suppose you ever inquired what this chap's duties were? Or how he had the time to be hanging around doing the social act? If you had, maybe you'd have discovered that his job was buying sardines and wrist-watches for the Camel Corps. I've seen a lot of those bally boys. They're quite fascinating, some of them. But I shouldn't want them for sons-in-law. I suppose your daughter thought he was in love with her; but of course he was only after your money, and as he couldn't get it one way he's now trying to get it another. However, if you aren't willing to give it to him, I don't know how he can get it—that's one comfort!"

He dropped the legs of his chair forward to the floor.

"As to the other aspect of it, they've got you on the law. She's the wife of a British subject, domiciled and resident in England, and with no legal ground for a decree of divorce under their statutes. Of course her husband can't keep her there—matrimonial slavery doesn't go *that* far in England, but he can put a legal padlock on the children, and apparently he's done it. Well, that being so, there's nothing for it but to let the law go hang and take the matter into our own hands."

Kayne's eyes brightened. This fellow was a man of action.

"How do you suggest going about it?" he inquired. "I don't want to have the Lord Chancellor clap my daughter into the Tower."

Maitland slowly refilled his pipe, and having lighted it, once more tilted back his chair until his head touched the wall.

"Do you happen to know anybody in the steamship business?" he asked meditatively.

"Why—yes. I'm a director in one company myself," replied Kayne.

"I should say," continued Maitland, "that somebody would have to run them out of England when the Lord Chancellor wasn't looking, and put them aboard a vessel outside the three-mile limit. It shouldn't be difficult. May cost you a trifle, but I should think you could combine the adventure with a cargo of machinery or something. Of course you can't go publishing their proposed sailing in the London papers and you can't write to your daughter about it; but the actual thing—the 'getaway'—ought to be fairly easy."

"How shall we go about it?" asked Kayne.

Maitland caressed his bony jaw.

"The whole thing will have to be explained personally to her, of course. Somebody will have to go over there and handle it directly—on the spot."

"Have you anybody you can send?"

The young lawyer looked contemplatively at the banker.

"I have an idea," he answered slowly, "that I know exactly the man for you—if he'll go—and I think he will. I'll talk it over with him and let you know. Anyhow, the whole thing will have to be worked out rather

carefully. Suppose I call you up about it in the course of a day or so?"

"Good!" cried his client, rising. "The sooner it is done the better. And," he added with a smile, "you must meet my wife and family. If you ever bring yourself to go to such things, I'll see that you're sent a card to my daughter's dance next week. Good night!"

He gave Maitland a friendly nod, shook hands, and walked out, leaving the lawyer wondering how any man in his senses could let his daughter marry an utter stranger on the latter's own representations. This Kayne was clearly a man of affairs, who in business probably never took a chance, yet who when it came to the most important event of his family life—the marriage of his daughter—shut his eyes and turned her over to a wretched adventurer too yellow to stay in his own country. His own butler would have required a fuller identification before delivering "goods to be called for" at the front door!

The elder lawyer was still poring over some papers at his desk when Maitland came into his office.

"Well, what do you make of him?" he asked, looking up whimsically.

"Frankly, I don't understand him at all!" answered his junior. "What sort of a person is he?"

Mr. Pepperill made a wry face over his manuscript.

"One of our best materialists! The greater success a man is in business the bigger failure he is apt to be at home. He's so busy feathering his nest that he hasn't any chance to look after his eggs. He is like a prima donna—whose art engrosses all her intention. Our financiers shouldn't marry, they haven't time!"

Maitland shook his head in mute amazement.

"Is his daughter herself—are the whole family like that?"

Mr. Pepperill thrust his pen into its bed of bird-shot and leaned back.

"More or less," he replied. "You've escaped—being away as you have—getting mixed up in their affairs; but now that you're back I think I shall turn them all over to you. Why have a junior partner unless he can relieve one of distasteful tasks? I've reached an age when I want to do business only for people I like. If you have finished with your work for the day, suppose we take the subway to Fifth Avenue and Sixtieth Street and walk back as far as Madison Square? That will give me an opportunity to tell you something more about the Kaynes."

"With pleasure, sir!" agreed Lloyd. "I'll meet you in the outer office in five minutes?"

The door closed, leaving Mr. Pepperill alone with himself; and with just the faintest shadow on his desiccated old heart because he did not have a tall, bony, strong, good-natured son like that. But it was only the faintest shadow, since apart from his gout Mr. Pepperill saw to it that he had no sorrows and regrets, having eliminated all such possibilities early in life. Death could not hurt him, for he had no relations—no wife, no child; his caution had kept him continent and he had nothing to fear from women; his fortune—and it was large—was invested in government securities; he never expressed himself publicly or took part in acrimonious discussions; he never climbed over an obstacle, but always made his way carefully around it; he was always courteous, diplomatic—qualifying all his opinions so as by no possibility to give offense or to prevent later a reasonable change of mind; in a word, he took no

chances, but lived sanely and reputably, playing safe and keeping the talent of his heart hidden in the napkin of discretion. So he had never suffered—except from the gout.

He signed a letter or two for Williamson, his secretary, a decorous but depressed quasi-legal gentleman, and then having put on his tight-fitting blue overcoat and tall hat, stood for a moment beside his desk glancing over the front page of the evening paper.

“Grand jury sifts new charges of city maladministration.” “Forty more indictments in building inquiry.” “Jury acquits bartender accused of liquor violation,” he read. Kayne’s query returned to his mind: “Do you think that to-day anybody cares?” He wondered if, after all, there might not be something in what the banker had said. Before him in cold print were the detailed reports of several official investigations into alleged corruption in public office, business abuses and conspiracies, all being conducted at the same time, and in spite of the evidence adduced exciting little interest. He could remember the time when any one of them would have turned a municipal election and aroused public indignation to the highest pitch. You had only to go back to Jerome’s campaign.

“Too much politics!” muttered Mr. Pepperill. “The people don’t trust these fellows, always hallooing ‘Wolf! Wolf!’ at one another.”

The war probably had had something to do with it, too. And look at the way the liquor law was being turned into a farce by juries sworn to uphold it! It was nothing less than perjury! If one didn’t know the inherent soundness of the American people!

He glanced around the room for reassurance—at the picture of Lord Eldon in his full-bottomed wig, at the

steel-engravings of Alexander Hamilton, Rufus Choate, Chief Justice Marshall, and Chancellor Kent, and, on the shelves at the end of the bookcase, at the green tin boxes containing the tangible records of his clients' stability and success. There they stood like solid rectangular blocks in the temple of his own prosperous career—bearing in letters of gold the names of the persons, estates, and corporations to which they were sacred. "Graham & Co."; "Peter B. Kayne"; "Utopia Trust Co."; "Estate of Mungo Graham, dec'd"; "Estate of Ezra Graham, dec'd"; "Kayne vs. Gould." There was an annual income of fifty thousand dollars in new retainers on the bottom shelf alone!

Yes, the world was all right. The war had disturbed things a little, but everything was fundamentally sound. Which reminded him that he was entertaining at dinner that very evening a small, select group of those who made it so. He had almost forgotten about it. Ringing for Williamson again, he instructed him to call up the house and tell Griffin, his butler, to be sure to cool the burgundy but not to chill it.

CHAPTER IV

THE HOUSE OF KAYNE

A HALF-HOUR later Mr. Pepperill accompanied by Colonel Maitland emerged from the subway in front of the Metropolitan Club at Sixtieth Street and started briskly southward. It had been snowing, and a white powder already marked by countless footprints lay upon the sidewalks. Maitland amused himself by wondering what different species of human animals had made them. Ahead—an infinite parallel of yellow lights—the vivid thoroughfare descended in a graceful curve, rising slightly half a mile beyond at Forty-second Street, only to sink again farther on near Thirty-fourth, and punctuated by traffic towers flashing their singing colors, now orange, now red, now green, while the jam of motors stopped and moved on in automatic obedience. His blood pricked in response to the bite of the frosty air, the surge of the crowds, the dim reverberation of churchbells, the “punch,” the “pep,” the gay gesture of the city after the day’s work.

“That,” said Mr. Pepperill, waving his malacca stick at a large brownstone mansion on one of the opposite corners in the neighborhood of the Cathedral, “is the Kayne house.”

At almost the same instant a closed motor drew up at the curb, a footman leaped down and whipped open the door, and a stout lady got out.

“The car at five minutes before eight for Miss Diana, Albert,” she said in a conciliatory tone as he touched

his visor. "And Miss Sheila will want you to take her to the Croyon at eleven."

"There is Mrs. Kayne, now," continued Mr. Pepperill, his quizzical glance following the figure of the lady into the house. In his mind's eye he pictured the heavy walnut wainscoting of the entrance-hall with its great organ surmounted by the carved mezzanine gallery, the five-foot porcelain and gilt Sèvres jars, the Greek slave of glistening Carrara marble peeping out coyly from behind its screen of palms, the bald, fat butler—Jarmon—closing the front door behind his mistress and bowing her ceremoniously into the elevator.

Maitland, however, saw only the substantial respectability of the brownstone façade.

"Some house!" he commented in the vernacular of five allies.

"Ought to be! Cost nearly a million—with the furniture," answered Mr. Pepperill tartly.

"But why don't you like the Kaynes? What's the matter with them?" persisted the younger man.

"Because," said he, "they think of nothing but money and fashion. Rank materialists all of them—from old Peter B., the founder of the family and the builder of that brownstone horror—to his children, Rufus and his brother and sister—and his grandchildren, the present younger generation. No doubt his great-grandchildren will be the worst of all! That's what the century of greatest commercial and scientific progress in the world's history did for us!" Mr. Pepperill paused and shook his cane so that a passing errand boy ducked involuntarily. "I know what I'm talking about because I was born in it like the elder Kaynes—although, thank God! I trust I'm not like them! It gave us porcelain plumbing, but it stifled the spiritual sense in most people.

Too much comfort! Too much prosperity! No ideals!"

They had reached Forty-second Street and their innocent attempt to cross had been abruptly prevented by a genial if patronizing policeman.

"Don't try it, boys!" he cautioned them. "Step back there! Take your time!"

Mr. Pepperill, ruffled, returned protestingly to the curb. There was no respect left for anything!

"The Bible says," remarked Maitland, "that the Lord visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Perhaps God, through the war, visited the sin of materialism upon all mankind?"

"A very apt analogy!" agreed Mr. Pepperill. "And the same thing has happened throughout all history from Babylon to Berlin. Look at the children of Israel when they worshipped the golden calf! Look at Rome!"

"Only this time the penalty was fifteen million lives!" thought the younger man.

"All right! Now ye can go!" announced the policeman, and the crowd burst over the curb, carrying Mr. Pepperill and his young partner along with it like logs upon the crest of a tidal wave.

The latter took his friend's arm affectionately. He had a great admiration for his ability and a keen regard for his wisdom. But it occurred to him as he guided the old man's steps to the opposite sidewalk that perhaps Mr. Pepperill's vision was slightly astigmatic. Was he able to see himself as he was? He was quite ready to pull the mote out of Kayne's eye—but wasn't there a beam in his own? Was he really any less of a materialist than the other?

To Maitland there was something terrible in the per-

fection with which the old lawyer handled all his earthly affairs, and the importance with which he invested them. His briefs were conclusive, his business was transacted with precision, his bachelor residence perfectly appointed, the attiring of his person attended to by a skilful valet. An English housekeeper saw that he was well served. A gentleman of the old school; a stickler for convention; something of a snob; a firm believer in tradition, inheritance, and the value of money; but a public-spirited citizen withal.

An old swell! who condescended to people like the Kaynes, but who yet did not hesitate to handle their business or to participate in their prosperity, upon which his own success—and that of "Crutchfield & Pepperill" as a firm—was in part based. The dear old gentleman shared their profits, no less ill-gotten, if ill-gotten, because he shared them; although the Kaynes and their kind may have fairly assumed that if an aristocrat like Mr. Pepperill took their money he, by a sort of king's touch, thereby removed the taint. And in a sense he did. The Kaynes owed their standing in a measure to Mr. Pepperill, just as they did to their doctor, clergyman, caterer, tailor, dressmaker, and dentist. For a part of what a client pays for is his lawyer's respectability. His fee is the entrance due into good company; and many a rascal would go to jail but for the gray hairs and suavity of the leader of the bar beside him who so eloquently defends the scurvy trick by which other clients of his may perchance have been robbed.

Weren't they in fact all a part of the same system—six of one to the half-dozen of the other—"the pot calling the kettle black"? As long as the Crutchfields and Pepperills would shake them by the hand and cash their checks in return for letters of "marque and

reprisal," the Peter Kaynes would probably continue to scuttle the ship of commerce and marry their granddaughters to princes!

"And over there," nodded the lawyer toward a twin brownstone mansion a few moments later, "is the James Kaynes's. They're very philanthropic and tiresome! I don't personally attend to their affairs—but I hear a great deal about them through my cousin Mrs. Brice-Brewster, and then, to be sure, I go there myself"—he coughed slightly—"occasionally. Typical Victorians!"

He clutched his partner's arm as they came to a dangerous-looking curb. "Confound it! Why don't they clean their sidewalks— After all, the Kaynes are the result of a natural social evolution. First generation, virile and predatory—that's Peter B.—a caveman and adventurer but a lovable old rascal at that; second generation, ultrarespectable, selfish, snobbish, hypocritical—that's Rufus and his brother and sister—what one might call the 'Brownstone Bourgeoisie.' "

Mr. Pepperill's blue eyes twinkled as if he considered the phrase he had coined distinctly good.

"Respectable to a degree! But without imagination! All gunning for what the first generation didn't have, and had the sense not to try for—social position. Born in Brooklyn and ashamed of it—because it's joked about in the musical shows. They forget that most of our best New York families came from Brooklyn just as most of the first families of Boston came from Salem—your great-grandfather, for instance."

"Did he?" answered Maitland. "I'd quite forgotten it!"

"Of course he did!" snapped Mr. Pepperill, as he halted suddenly on a crossing. "That rascal's not pay-

ing the slightest attention! Why don't you look where you're going, sir?"

"And the third generation?" asked his companion as they reached the other side.

The older lawyer gave a vague shrug.

"They don't look where they're going, either! I don't really know what the world is coming to!" he ejaculated. "But the outcome is not surprising. You see, the second generation—the Jameses and the Rufuses and the rest—never woke up to the fact that their game wasn't worth the candle. Whereas their children did—in their cradles—and started out to make up for lost time! At two hundred miles an hour—Wasters most of them! No wonder they call this 'The Jazz Age'!"

"I won't quarrel with the term!" said Maitland. "But did these Kaynes—I mean the generation represented by our client Rufus—get what they were after?"

"Only in part!" answered Mr. Pepperill. "Only what they could buy. They achieved a kind of social position—the newspaper variety—but without any distinction. They're not really 'smart'—although their children *are*—if you know what I mean."

Maitland nodded.

"I get you!" he replied. "How many Kayne children are there? And what are they like?"

"Three girls," returned Mr. Pepperill. "Sheila, who's coming out next week, just a little bundle of nerves, the helpless victim of her environment; Claudia, whom you know about already; and Diana—the eldest. They're a good example of what materialism has brought us to! Talk about the sins of the fathers being visited upon their children—you couldn't have a better illustration of it than these Kaynes. Of course part of it is war reac-

tion and part of it is just kicking over the traces—a repudiation of Victorian conventionality.”

“Action and reaction are equal and opposite!” smiled Maitland.

“But it’s more than that,” went on Mr. Pepperill. “The Kaynes are running to seed. Moral shirt-sleeves to moral shirt-sleeves in three generations. They’re ‘going bad,’ as the saying is.”

“Running to seed,” were they? The words of the burial service flashed through Maitland’s mind: “That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.” Perhaps there was more in the situation than the old man thought. Not so simple! Some hope, at any rate.

“But such people!” growled Mr. Pepperill. “If they didn’t belong to an infinitesimally small class I should think that America was going to the devil, but they exert no influence and aren’t of the slightest importance!”

Maitland wondered. Were the Kaynes and their kind as unimportant as Mr. Pepperill alleged? In spite of their small number were they not typical of modern American tendencies? Was there not a writing for all to read upon the brownstone façade of the Kayne mansion? The Kaynes—America—the world! These jazzing boys and girls, whirling and vibrating like water insects upon the surface of a stagnant pool—what would they breed?

“How about the eldest girl?” he asked as they neared Madison Square.

“Diana?”

Mr. Pepperill raised his hands in simulated horror, thereby dropping his precious cane.

“The wildest of all of them!” he exclaimed, while Maitland picked it up. “Clever, reckless; talked about

for years before she came out; reported engaged every six months. Goes with an entirely different crowd from her family—ever so much smarter socially—a sort of inner-inner circle. And between ourselves very likely a ‘wrong ‘un.’ Before she gets through—mark my words!—she’ll be in twice the pickle her sister Claudia is in already or her sister Sheila ever will be! She’s really dangerous, that girl! If you meet her, take my advice and give her plenty of room.”

“I hope we shall meet her!” murmured Maitland.

“We shan’t!” returned his friend as the traffic stopped at the red flash. “She never walks. She’s much too expensive. You turn off here, don’t you? Forgive my chatter.”

“We seem to have walked straight through the Victorian era!” laughed the younger man.

“And thank Heaven for it!” ejaculated Mr. Pepperill.

“If you don’t mind,” added Maitland hurriedly, “I’d like to get away early Friday and skip Saturday altogether. Mr. Lawrence Devereaux has asked me down for a couple of days’ shooting at his place—‘Treasure Island,’ I think they call it. I’ve nothing pressing on hand except this matter of Lady Harrowdale’s, and that will probably take some time.”

Mr. Pepperill clucked with satisfaction.

“Certainly, my boy! Go and stay as long as you like. Larry Devereaux is the right sort! Sends me a brace of pheasants every year. Wish I were going with you. Well, good night, and good luck to you!”

Mr. Pepperill with a nod and a smile over his dapper shoulder continued to walk straight on down Fifth Avenue, while Maitland swung across Madison Square in the direction of Irving Place, where he lodged with

the young Englishman, Nigel Craig, whom he had met in Paris and induced to come to America with him. He had a great affection for this gentle, almost girlish-looking lad, the youngest of five brothers, the others all killed in action, himself so badly gassed at Ypres that the doctors had at first given him up—a colonel of infantry at twenty-four.

At that moment Craig was sitting before the grate in their sitting-room staring with bent head into the fire. He was at the end of his resources. That he could find no situation appropriate to a man of his training in the great city of New York made him desperate. Of course he could work with his hands on some farm in Australia or Manitoba, but it seemed rather hard to throw away an Oxford education. There was a writing-pad on his knee and a pencil in the right hand that drooped, like the left, over the arm of the chair. On the pad had been written in a schoolboy's hand the following:

To Capt. Roy Kincardine,
Queens Own Huzzars, Aldershot.

DEAR KINKY:

Thanks for your letter which reached me in Cologne about two months ago. It is very jolly of you to offer to put me up but as you see, I've pulled my stakes and gone to America. I can never bring myself to live in England again. It would be different if I had even a sister left. As it is I shall try to work out something for myself over here. Just now I am sharing lodgings with Maitland, the chap you saw with me in Coblenz. He's a great fellow! I wish you knew him better. The weather here has been wonderfully clear and sparkling, such as we had that winter we were at Château d'Oex. It is not a bit like what we have at home. You must be getting a lot of hunting. I should like to see England again, but——

The writing stopped here abruptly, for he had found he could no longer see to write. Since his gassing the

tears often came quite unexpectedly. There was nothing the matter with him now, though, except the fits of stupor that overcame him at intervals like some deadly narcotic. But they did not last as long as at first and he was physically feeling much more fit. Nigel Craig's mother had been the acknowledged beauty of her generation in her part of England and John Sargent's picture of her, famous as "The Girl with the Gray Eyes" had been the talk of the hour at the Academy the year she was presented. She had died shortly after receiving the news of the death of her third son in the counter-surprise at Bapaume. "I should like to see England again, but—" No, he could not go back!

Maitland walked around Gramercy Park, stopped in front of a small brick house on Irving Place, unlatched the door, and shouted:

"Oh, Nigel!"

A cheerful whistle answered him and he bounded upstairs, while Craig arose quickly and stood with his back to the fire, forcing a smile to his face as Maitland came in.

"Hello!" remarked the Englishman. "You must have been drawing a will for Mr. Methuselah!"

Lloyd took his offered cigarette and borrowed a light.

"Any luck?" he demanded.

Craig shook his head grimly.

"Not yet. Nobody pressed me to go into partnership with him or to show him how to spend his money, or to marry his daughter. However, I'm not discouraged. If I can't find any other job I'll pretend I'm Irish, get myself naturalized, and join the police force."

"Oh, you'll find something!" declared Lloyd. "Just hang on a bit and luck will come your way."

"Right-o!" replied his friend. "'Are we down-

hearted?' Something tells me that to-morrow—or at very latest the day after—a dark woman will come into my young life."

Lloyd spread his hands before the fire.

"It's just possible," he said casually, "that I can get you a job that would take you to England—if you'd be willing to go."

He explained Claudia Kayne's predicament, and how he purposed to get her out of it. It was, he said, an undertaking for which Nigel was in every way qualified. He knew England—perhaps he knew Surrey?

Craig nodded. Into the gray eyes, which he alone of her sons had inherited from his mother, came an eager look. He had been born in Surrey! By merely closing those eyes he could hear the evening callings of the rooks above the grove back of the old, ivy-covered stone house. The village boys would be playing football on the common; there would be a smell of burning leaves; old Collomb, the vicar, would be smoking his pipe standing by his gate, and from the barns would come the sweet odor of cattle and the rhythmic sing-song of the milk-pails, as the violet dusk came creeping from beneath the trees.

He could imagine himself a little boy trudging homeward at sunset over the dusty roadway, to find his mother waiting for him at the wicket. Now the wicket was locked and fastened with wire and the boys on the common were new boys who would stare curiously at him as he went by. Only the gray-haired Collomb would recognize him with a "Bless me, if it isn't Nigel! How are you, my dear fellow! Yes, Mrs. Collomb is nicely, thank you," and then there would be the awkward silence in which the mind of each walked over to the deserted house, and like a ghost stalked through the

silent rooms. "Well, I must be going back to London!" "Oh, must you? Well, look in on us again some day!" Could he endure it? And yet there stood another ghost at his elbow whispering that if he didn't go now he might never see any of it again.

"When do you want me to start?" he asked quietly.

"Soon. Next week, perhaps."

"I'll go," said Nigel. "And"—he put out his hand—"thank you a thousand times, old boy! You don't know what this means to me! I say, hurry and wash. Let's go out and forage for some chow and go to a bally show!"

Thus these two young men, who three months before had been strangers to each other, now began to be drawn into the life of a family no one of whom up to that day either of them had ever met.

CHAPTER V

"THE CORNER STORE"

WHEN Rufus Kayne left the law offices of Crutchfield & Pepperill, although he ordered his chauffeur to go up-town, it was not with any intention of returning home. Except upon those occasions when he spent an hour or so with his father, he avoided his own house deliberately until forced to put in an appearance for dinner. His habits were regular. Thrice each week he drove to McMahan's Turkish Baths, and thrice he stopped his motor at the junction of Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street and walked to "The Corner Store," the club his membership in which he most highly prized. On this particular evening, owing, no doubt, to the recrudescence of his daughter Claudia's misfortunes, he felt so disgruntled that he drove there directly.

Few men go to more than one club, just as few dogs lie in more than one corner. The club is man's last untaken fortress in the onward rush of feminism; the husbands' union; the final rally for independence of an old guard determined to die behind its plate-glass intrenchments rather than surrender; the sanctuary where its members can cast aside pretense and hypocrisy, speak their minds without pother, and do as they choose within the limits of the by-laws. Here all men are truly equal; less obviously in their virtues than in their weaknesses; and here for a hundred and fifty a year one may carp and growl to his heart's content, exhibit all his

natural idiosyncrasies, and cast aside all conversational shackles without fear of protest or recrimination.

A club never changes, but remains the sepulchre of the era in which it was erected. Men do not go there to delight their souls, but to forget that they have them. The tarnished tables, the sagging chairs, the ancient hangings produce a pleasing sense of permanence and continuity. The scent of tobacco smoke, decaying leather, and dusty plush hovers like incense over the altar of the past at which the ghosts of departed members officiate as priests. Take away old Jones's chair from its corner? The mere suggestion is a profanation. Did not he sit in it for thirty years? His shade hovers about it still. Cantankerous, mean-minded, stingy, foul-mouthed, but "a member in good standing." We abhorred him when alive but we cherish fond memories of him now that he is gone. One of our dead comrades. Good old Jones! Don't you remember the night he got more than usually tight, wandered into the Turkish bath, and fell into the swimming-tank? The recollection of that historic incident warms the cockles of our hearts.

Thus by visiting the club we renew our innate conviction of male superiority and gain an assurance of sex solidarity that makes us loth to see its physical aspect altered in any particular. We want the old cave left just as it always has been, smoky, smelly, dirty doubtless, but a refuge protected from she-wolves and tigresses, where we can crawl away to be by ourselves and eventually die without female interference. So outwardly a club does not change; and since protective coloring is the wise order of a beneficent nature, the general tone and character of its membership remains the same, until in time by a natural process of

dissolution it ceases to be a club at all and becomes a fashionable dressmaking establishment or second-class restaurant.

Whenever Rufus Kayne's confidence in the actual value of his success faltered—as, particularly of recent years, it occasionally did—he had only to cross the marble threshold into the genial atmosphere of "The Corner Store" to have that confidence restored, to be hailed jovially by half a dozen of New York's most successful men, and to share instantly the hearty, good-natured optimism which permeates it. Your "Corner Boy" always sings a prosperous song, even if he is rather noisy over it, like a fat robin. He finds the world a jolly place to live in, and he wants everybody to know it. How could it be otherwise when he is making money? And his conversation is calculated to drive dull care away although limited to such intellectualities as: "Did you see where General Motors went to?"—"How's the new Rolls going?" or "I've got a little fellow who lets me have it for seventy a case." Chatting with these sleek men of affairs who played golf at a hundred dollars a hole and bridge at ten cents a point, Kayne could not but be reassured.

Having told his chauffeur to wait, he entered the club, surrendered his coat and hat to a white-haired shabby man servant, and walked up-stairs to the card-room. It was full and several men who saw him in the doorway nodded. The library was empty, but from the "chapel," where the local sacraments were being incidentally administered despite the constitutional amendment, came a sound of revelry. "Uncle Jerry" Plumley was having a birthday-party and unlimited champagne was flowing.

The old clubman who had been in a state of satura-

tion for fifty years was now swaying unsteadily beside the bar drinking with all comers at his own expense, and he hailed Kayne by his first name like a lost son.

"Hello, Ruf', old man. 'S my birthday—I'm seventy. Yes, I've beaten the doctors! They'd 'a' buried me twenty years ago. But there's life in the old dog yet. 'Nuther bottle, Sam."

The crowd in the little room surged toward the temporary barkeeper, who obediently produced another bottle from Uncle Jerry's apparently unfailing cruse and filled the row of glasses. To Kayne there was something horrible in the aspect of this bleary-eyed old man who, having reached life's allotted span, could honor his gray hairs in no better way than by getting drunk.

"Well, good luck to you, Uncle Jerry! May you live long and prosper!" he said and raised his glass with a forced smile.

There was a cheer from the others.

"Here's to Uncle Jerry—luck! Many happy returns! Good old boy! Dear old Jerry!"

Uncle Jerry, clinging with one hand to the bar, raised his glass.

"Boys!" he announced with drunken solemnity. "You know—hup!—I love you all! Each and every one! I'm an old, old man an' I've done nothing but drink all my life—hup!—but I've done that pretty well."

He looked around for confirmation.

"I've not done a damn thing 'cept drink, but I'm seventy years old an' I've—hup!—enjoyed every minute of it. Now I'm goin' to tell you somethin'. Any man who doesn't have a good time while he can—hup!—he's a fool! Tha's worth knowing!"

"Of course it is," said Kayne, putting his arm around

the old man and urging him gently toward the door. "And you've had an exceptionally good time. No one can deny that!"

"In which case," cried Uncle Jerry, wheeling suddenly, "let's have another! Who knows where we'll all be this time next year?"

*"One little dog!
And another little dog!
Sat on a piec-e of char-coal!"*

Kayne backed across the threshold. He had had enough of this ribald old Noah. On the stairs he ran into Darcy, a golfing banker, revered by him as moving in circles smarter than his own.

"Hello!" said Darcy as he passed. "I understand the immortal Jeremiah has a load on. What's the matter? You look off your peck!"

"Makes me sick!" answered Kayne with a frown. "An old man like that!"

"It is rather raw," agreed Darcy. He paused, one foot on the top stair. "By the way, I'm motoring your daughter down to Devereaux's with me to-morrow morning—for the week-end. The birds are coming in strong. He wires me the ponds are black with 'em!"

"I hadn't heard anything about it," replied Kayne. "She never tells me anything. Who else is to be there?"

"Nobody but Longwood and some young chap Larry picked up abroad—Maitland, I think the name is."

"Fellow in Pepperill's office?"

"I think so."

"Please remember me to my daughter," remarked Rufus ironically.

Down the stairs floated a straggling chorus.

*"One little dog!
And another little dog!"*

He turned into the deserted library and sank into a seat on the Fifth Avenue side. Purple lights gleamed through the park, each surrounded by a reflected nimbus from the russet leaves which now and again fluttered to the earth like dying moths.

He lit a cigarette. So Diana was on the loose again! Why the devil didn't she marry Devereaux and be done with it? This going off alone with men would get her talked about more than ever. A lot she cared. Nobody'd ever been able to do anything with her. Yet he was conscious of a secret pride that his daughter should be a real high-flyer. If she actually married Devereaux! That would be a ten strike for a Kayne! And that young Maitland must be a swell in disguise. Foxy old Pepperill knew all about people and kept his eyes open. He was glad he had been cordial to Maitland and invited him to Sheila's dance. Dance?—he'd have him round to dinner! Maybe if he were that sort he'd do for Sheila. He scowled into the shadow and an old woman, whose feet were wrapped in bagging stuffed with imperial to keep off chilblains, and who had been stealing fire-wood from the dwelling in course of erection across the way, wondered why a gentleman who was so obviously warm and well-fed should be concerned about anything.

Kayne did not even notice the bent figure as it crouched by under its load of lath. Why, he asked himself, with a growing irritation, hadn't he ever become a swell himself? Wasn't he as much of a gentleman as Darcy? Yet Devereaux never asked him down to Treasure Island, and never accepted their in-

vitations to dinner. Well, frankly, why should he? A lot of stodgy people with double chins sitting around a table and cackling about nothing, and then yawning surreptitiously until the butler passed the fizzy water, and they could stagger to their feet and say with a smirk: “Thank you so much, Mrs. Kayne! We have had such a delightful evening!” Delightful evening! Bah! That was old stuff! He knew well enough that big dinners were no longer in fashion, and that the smart people had learned to do as they liked.

The old woman had shuffled off dreaming of tea and Yarmouth bloater, and a young policeman swinging his club impatiently as he waited on the curb for the pretty laundress who worked next door to keep her evening tryst with him, cried for want of anything better to say: “Beat it, grandma, before I run you in!”

Kayne screwed his cigarette into the ash-receiver. Damn it all, what had he got out of it? What did being a successful man amount to? The people who ate his dinners came to his house merely because it gave them something to do. Dinner for dinner!

This business of bringing up a family—which his pious old mother had taught him was such a sacred duty—was all nonsense! What good was it? What satisfaction was there in having children who were never at home from one week’s end to another? As for Elizabeth, his wife, she bored him so with her eternal talk about bridge, dinners, and what Mrs. Brice-Brewster and her other friends thought about this, that, and the other, that he dreaded an evening with her. He’d rather live at a hotel—where at least you could see what was going on. A great life!

With a grimace he banged the bell and lighted a fresh cigarette.

“Order my motor!” he told the servant who came grudgingly from the hall.

Slowly—almost feebly—Rufus Kayne went downstairs and mechanically allowed the doorman to put on his coat.

Outside he paused with one foot on the running-board of the limousine. Where should he go? Where could he find relief from himself?

“Home!” he said at length.—“Hell!”

CHAPTER VI

TREASURE ISLAND

"DEEP COVE. You get out here, sir. End of the road."

The friendly conductor gave Maitland a hand with his bags as the wabbly train ground to a stop in the darkness, and he dropped to the platform by the light of a lantern held by a rat-faced young fellow in oversized golf cap and trim gaiters, who touched his forelock with a "This way, sir. Let me have your bags, sir. Gun, sir?" in the clipped, snappy speech of the dependent aristocracy of the British sporting class.

Lloyd confessed to having brought no gun and was conscious of a certain alteration in the youth's demeanor, imagining that he now detected in it a shade of condescension.

"Mr. Devereaux wished me to say he was sorry he couldn't come across himself to meet you, but they were walking up the West Heather this afternoon and wouldn't be in till late. You'll find it a bit cold, sir, on the boat. So I brought you an overcoat."

The night was foggy and Maitland had to exercise care to prevent slipping as he followed the lantern along a sandy stretch of road, and out upon a long dock at the end of which glowed nebulously the red and green lights of the waiting launch. He was aware of several black forms moving along with them, and once a hand took him by the arm and gently directed him aright,

and these men, whoever they were, murmured now and again to one another in subdued tones. A chill wind from the sound tossed the mist in fantastic streams from the lantern and bore with it the harsh smell of eel-grass and kelp and the softer odors of the receding tide. From the unseen darkness came the squeak of an occasional gull.

“Careful, sir!”

He was looking down into a lighted cockpit and upon several men who with outstretched hands assisted him to descend. He experienced surprise and a sort of elated embarrassment at his own importance. A bell rang and the launch churned the water at her stern and moved away, the lights of the station and upon the dock end receding swiftly. The breeze bit his face and the waves slapped the sides viciously.

“Better put on the overcoat, sir!”

He obeyed, and ascended to the deck.

“Will you have tea, sir? Or something to drink? It’s all ready below.”

Maitland thanked the steward but declined. He was too interested in what was going to happen to lose a moment. He knew that “Treasure Island” lay but a few miles offshore, and the sturdy launch was making the water fly at fifteen miles an hour. In twenty minutes at most he would reach his destination—an island owned in its entirety by a single individual, possessing over it so far as was possible under our form of government feudal rights directly inherited from colonial days, when it had been ceded to his ancestors as a manorial grant by the royal charter of King James.

Not a gun had been fired upon its shores and uplands since 1635 save by the lord proprietor and his guests. Its coverts teemed with pheasants and lesser game-birds;

deer sprang from the bracken at the approach of the stranger, and bounded away across the green open and through the scrub-oak; while myriads of sea-fowl sought passing haven on its salt coves and dune-protected marshes. A huntsman's paradise!

Suddenly a faint glow appeared above the distant pines. The moon was coming up. Ahead unexpectedly loomed the black outline of the island, with its ghostly white dunes. The breeze dropped, cut off by some unseen headland, and the launch slipped silently ahead preceded by a ripple that spread wide like two great wings on either side beating the shore. The bell rang again. Then twice! A faint halloo! A light—several lights—shone bright among the trees, and from the land came the sweet smell of wood smoke. A rope was thrown, there was a scramble of dark forms, and the visitor was led up a narrow gang-plank, at the top of which a lean man in shooting togs received him—the head keeper.

“Mr. Devereaux is at the house, sir.”

A mannish redolence of leather, pipe-tobacco, gun-powder, and dogs floated on the mist. A setter, curvetting, got between Maitland's legs and nearly upset him, and another leaped up and kissed his neck. “Down Pétain! Down Foch! What luck on the High Ground? Forty-eight? Not bad that! Rest 'em to-morrow, I suppose. That bitch has something the matter with her ear. Mr. Blythe isn't comin'—I brought the telegram—Good night, captain! Good night!”

Maitland strode quickly toward the lights. This was really jolly! The smell of smoke grew stronger, now mingled with that of cooking. The path brought him to a white wicket gate and to irregular flags leading through an old-fashioned garden redolent of pungent herbs and dying bloom. Just ahead of him the manor-

house rose against a grove of oaks, its open door pouring forth a yellow welcome across the mist-silvered hedges beside him. He climbed up a steep flight of wooden steps to a veranda.

Through the doorway he could look into a narrow hall and thence into a wide, low-studded, homelike room, furnished with chintz-covered lounging-chairs, where a fire crackled in an immense fireplace. Through the door drifted a haze of cigarette smoke and echoed the sporadic click of cards. He allowed a servant to help him off with his coat, tossed his cap onto a table littered with miscellaneous garments, and stepped to the threshold of the drawing-room.

At one end of the mantel stood Devereaux, ruddy and smiling, and beside him with her back to the door a girl in a Norfolk jacket of rough tweed, khaki breeches, and leather gaiters. A lamp beyond shone redly through her hair and outlined a supple figure a shade above middle height. Their two heads were close together, the girl engaged in filling from a silver receptacle in her right hand a glass held by her host. This accomplished, she raised her face to his with a laughing remark and he bent quickly over and kissed her. From the back of the room a man's voice drawled:

"Don't do that, Larry!"

Across her shoulder Devereaux's eyes caught Maitland's figure in the doorway and he called out, apparently in nowise embarrassed:

"Caught, eh! Hallo, there, old boy! Welcome to our ancestral shades! We only got in a moment ago or I'd have been on the dock."

He placed the cocktail on the mantelpiece and gripped his guest's hand heartily. Then he turned to the girl, who still held the shaker.

"Lloyd, let me present you to Miss Kayne. Di—this is my friend—Colonel Maitland."

Lloyd could hardly conceal his surprise at the girl's presence. He had had no idea that his host was entertaining ladies, or that he even knew this one who had happened to be the subject of Mr. Pepperill's diatribe the afternoon before. And Diana, because all men stimulated her, and especially on account of what Larry had told her of this one, returned his gaze with interest.

She was used to the hunting type, rangy men tall enough to allow their clothes to hang well, and the newcomer qualified as to height. But his clothes did not hang on him well at all, and apparently he had none of the graces of the courtier, for his steady brown eyes seemed to Diana to be taking her all in rather critically and rather disapprovingly. "He's heard something about me!" flashed through her mind. "And of course he thinks it's true. Well—let him!" She could not account for the fact that she should care, but Lloyd was instantly conscious that she did. He had never seen a face like hers. It rose from her slightly drooping shoulders, on the swathed neck of her heavy, brown worsted sweater like a white jungle flower shot with scarlet, and it seemed to him as if some subtle odor, also like that of a mysterious flower, emanated from her and drew him to her against his will. Yet she had done nothing, said nothing. He had merely passed into the sphere of her gravitational influence and felt the slight pull which might or might not set him whirling round her, depending upon the strength of her desire or his self-control.

In the stirring of his blood was mingled another and more spiritual constituent—of pity, almost approaching pain—that she should not be everything that

her beauty symbolized. He knew that she was not and the knowledge hurt him. She was far too sensuous with her almond eyes, her complexion of creamy alabaster, her high cheek-bones, her pouting, half-sullen mouth, and that great mass of bronze-red hair looped across her wide, low forehead.

"Why does Larry have such a girl around!" he asked himself.

Then the girl smiled and his question was answered.

"*How* are you?" she said in a husky voice, strangely like a man's. "Have a drink? It's a great life if you don't weaken!"

"Thanks!" answered Lloyd as she filled his glass. "But I'll not weaken!" he added to himself. His impulse to refer to her sister Claudia he restrained. He was not there in the capacity of family lawyer.

"What's doin' over there?" called the same voice that had challenged Devereaux's salute. "Aren't we in on this?"

"Of course you are! Come to the Pierian spring!" retorted the girl. "I'm playing no favorites!"

"Alas!" sighed Devereaux. "Here, you chaps, I want you to know my friend Maitland. This is 'Bud' Longwood—he makes a living knocking ivory balls around with a mallet—and, of course, you know Dick Darcy."

Maitland recognized the names of a celebrated polo back and a no less famous golfer who in his idle moments played at banking. Longwood was a big, curly-headed, forthright chap who apparently sought to relieve himself from all intellectual responsibility by pretending to an almost infantile simplicity of mind, which, however, frequently disclosed a considerable insight into men and affairs, his constant introductory phrase being: "Oh, I

haven't any brains! All I know about is horses and not much about them, but it seems to me—" He sat loosely, his legs wide apart and sprawling, his head thrown back with his arms behind it and his shirt-collar generally open. He spoke habitually in a loud, resonant voice without varying the pitch.

Darcy, too, struck Maitland as far from a lightweight, for while this bronzed veteran of sport carried himself with a jaunty, almost rakish, air, his bronzed cheeks were heavily lined, and his faded eyes were shrewdly appraising.

Both greeted Lloyd warmly. Then Devereaux drove them all up-stairs and, with his arm linked through his new guest's, conducted him to his room and showed him its cabinet of colonial costumes, pointing out those which particular ancestors had worn, the sampler worked by his great-great-grandmother, the duelling-pistols over the fireplace, and the whereabouts of the whiskey decanter and cigarettes.

"My room is directly across the landing opposite, old man! If you want anything, shout for it! You've got forty minutes before dinner. Jolly glad to have you down here!"

He clapped his guest on the shoulder and closed the door behind him.

Devereaux's valet was already unpacking Lloyd's bags.

"Yes, sir," he said. "The gentlemen almost always dress for dinner—particularly when Miss Kayne is here."

For some unknown reason his words filled Maitland with an unjustifiable sense of personal injury.

When an hour later Miss Kayne appeared on the threshold of the drawing-room she seemed altogether a

different person. The touch of the bizarre and the daring was gone with the breeches and gaiters, the sweater and the disarray of her hair, which now was wound like a heavy crown about her head. Over her forehead she had pinned in it a tiny crescent of diamonds. Exotic before, she was exquisite now. Devereaux stepped forward, but, instead of offering her his arm as he might have done, threw it about her—somewhat ostentatiously it seemed to his guest—and drew her thus into the room.

“Don’t get up, boys!” she protested as they arose. “Larry, why so affectionate? Your friend isn’t used to our playful little ways!”

“He must concede me my feudal prerogatives!” retorted the lord of the manor. “And—I insist upon them all!”

Miss Kayne lit a cigarette and gave a little sigh of contentment. Apparently although she had been carrying a gun all day, she felt no fatigue and remained standing in front of the fire, perhaps consciously adding a note of completeness to the picture of luxurious comfort presented by the smouldering five-foot logs, the oil-paintings of rosy old boys in lace and wigs, and of pallid ladies with the bottle shoulders and narrow satin bodices of the seventeenth century. There were hanging there, although Maitland did not know it, Van Dycks, Copleys, and Stuarts, and the firelight played carelessly on armchairs, cabinets, and gate-leg tables brought overseas together with the very bricks of which the manor-house was built, nearly three hundred years before, and now worth at any dealer’s sale ten times their weight in silver.

The butler announced dinner, and Devereaux with Diana led the way down the hall to a low, oak-panelled dining-room with leaded casement windows

where snapped another open fire, beneath a mantel crowded with trophies of silver and pewter. Here and there a hunting print, a pair of antlers, or a cub's head broke the wall's monotony, but what gave the room its cheeriest aspect was the broad seats of red leather in the embrasures of the windows and the red chairs ranged about the table.

Devereaux seated Diana with some ceremony upon his right and then waved Lloyd into the place opposite her, while Darcy took the chair at the other end seemingly as a matter of course, and Longwood sprawled beside Lloyd, lifting one of the silver candles from its socket to light his cigarette.

"Some of the old Irroy, Wilmot," whispered Devereaux to the butler in an aside, and when the latter had filled the glasses he arose and said:

"Beautiful lady and gallant gentlemen! I have a toast to propose. To our latest arrival, our friend Lloyd Maitland!"

"Hear! Hear!" cried Diana, and they turned to Lloyd and drank. Clearly they knew all about him, the story of his rescue of Devereaux in the Argonne when the latter's plane had fallen between the lines.

"Now you're a full-fledged member," Diana confidentially assured him. "Larry has to be awfully soft on anybody to make a speech. Nothing else could induce him to stagger to his little feet."

"He saved my worthless life!" cut in Devereaux. "If it weren't for his childish modesty I'd tell you all about it."

"Then we're all equally in his debt!" declared Diana. "We couldn't get on without Larry, you know, Colonel Maitland! When he dies we're going to have him stuffed!"

There followed a moment of slight self-consciousness;

then Longwood, imitating Larry's manner, cried out grandiloquently:

"Beautiful lady and gallant gentlemen! I'll give you a toast! To our last drink—it saved my life! Let's have another!" And he held out his glass to the sedate man servant, who at a gesture from Devereaux placed the bottle beside the polo-player's plate.

Darcy was obviously bored. "D'y'see that pheasant of yours tower this afternoon, Larry?" he asked. "It went up so high it must have come down some'eres off Montauk. Di wiped my eye badly on the knoll. Damn bird corkscrewed like a snipe. Forty-eight in all, wasn't it? That's better than we did last year!"

"By six," answered their host. "Am I right, Di?"

The girl nodded.

"But then we got seventy-one on the West Upland. And ninety-seven brace on the Big Drive. What a day!"

"We must show Lloyd what we can do! Fergus says there never have been so many birds."

Devereaux turned and laid his hand on Maitland's sleeve.

"Honestly, old man! you don't know how glad I am to have you here."

Lloyd patted his friend's hand.

"And I to be here! I didn't know there was anything like this in America—or anywhere else, for that matter."

He was warm with wine; thrilled with a strange excitement, like a neophyte newly admitted to some esoteric order. It was not his life—he could be at best only a non-resident member, but he saw that whatever its faults it was virile, chivalrous, and without pretense, and he felt for these comparative strangers a sense of

comradeship akin to that which he had had for his own men at the front.

He saw, too, that these men had achieved a perfection in their undertakings which marked them as of genuine intelligence and moral quality, whatever the cosmic value of those undertakings may have been. And he felt the glamour of being behind the scenes and the fascination of a life where as a matter of course one knew everybody one wanted to know, from statesmen and generals to actresses and royalty. Devereaux was indeed a "lord proprietor." To know him and his friends was to be one of those who secretly pull the strings to which the world dances.

Darcy had got up and was standing before the fire. The candle-light brought out the shadows beneath his eyes and the lines about his deeply carven chin.

"Democracy?" he growled. "If the war proved anything it was the absolute failure of democracy. The next radical is going to be the man who has the courage to come out frankly and say so and to advocate a benevolent autocracy!"

"In that case I nominate Larry for the job!" Longwood emphatically declared.

The girl opposite Maitland lifted her eyes and smiled cryptically. He seemed to read in their dreamy glance a challenge, as if she were thinking: "Say what you like! Let dynasties, philosophies, and religions fall. I alone remain. I rule the world."

She had pushed back her chair and, as she sat with her hands clasped in her lap, the candle-light glowed upon the white softness of her shoulders and the white roundness of her arms, upon the odd spread of her cheekbones that gave her that foreign look, and upon the scornful curve of her mouth.

Suddenly he became aware of the fact that he desired this woman as he had never desired anything in his life before, that he wanted to lean across the table and seize those drooping shoulders in his arms and press those red lips to his own, just as Devereaux had done. This desire grew upon him until it became quite obvious to that highly trained observer, Mr. Wilmot, who from his superior point of vantage had observed many men under similar conditions for several generations in the best society of both England and America. Indeed, when he went out to the pantry to fetch the brandy he remarked confidently to Fergus McLeod, the half-decrepit and now practically retired "head keeper emeritus," who was waiting to get the orders for the next day's shooting: "Fergus, that Colonel Maitland 'as fallen flat for Lady Di. 'E's got it bad, 'e 'as. I know that look. An' she's not averse to 'im, either, to my way of thinkin'."

To which Fergus replied laconically, if prophetically:

"Then there be 'ell to pay, Mr. Wilmot."

Something—the wine, perhaps—had slightly suffused Maitland's eyes. He heard Longwood getting off some silly crack about "low highbrows" and "high lowbrows," and Darcy barking about things political—and they annoyed him, for across the candles he could scent haunting perfumes of the East, and hear above the beating of the blood in his forehead the chiming of temple bells.

Larry had taken down from the mantel an ornately chased communion chalice purloined doubtless in the middle ages—"The Augsburg Cup"—and with a strained expression was scribbling upon a pad.

"It's bedtime," he remarked with an effort noticeable to none but Wilmot. "We're to be called early to-morrow."

He tore off four slips from the pad and dropped them into the cup.

"Fergus says the wind's come up, with a dash of rain from the northeast. That will bring the birds in. We'll shoot the Salt Marsh, the Lagoon, Pirate's Cove, and the Tarn. I'll take the Marsh. You draw for the others."

He pushed the cup toward Diana, who negligently withdrew the nearest slip.

"The Tarn," she said.

Darcy and Longwood drew together, and Maitland after them.

"I've pulled the Cove," announced Longwood.

"Mine's the Lagoon," added the golfer. Only one slip remained.

"That means you shoot with Miss Kayne," said Devereaux. "And now how about a gun for you?"

They drifted into the dimly lit hall, one side of which was filled with a great sliding panel of glass. Behind it were ranged a dozen or so guns of all sizes.

"Let him try the Nichols you gave the rector," suggested Longwood. "It's got just the right spread!"

"No," answered Devereaux, as he took down an elaborately chased weapon. "I'm going to give him mine. All that I have is his!"

"What's the matter? Aren't you going out?" demanded Darcy.

"Yes, but I'd like to see what he can do with it. Besides, I may change my mind and try to walk up some of those odd birds that got away from us yesterday—Candles, everybody? How about a 'wee doc and doris'? Well, good night. Look out for her, Maitland. Don't let her take your birds!"

He stood at the foot of the stairs holding his candle for them, debonair, valiant; staring after the slowly ascending shadows.

CHAPTER VII

THE TARN

"TIME to get up, sir!"

A hand grasping Maitland's ankle awoke him with a start to a world softly flooded with lamplight.

"It's four o'clock, sir. The other gentlemen have been up some time."

For a moment he could not recollect why it was that they were all getting up at that hour, and then the peculiar habits of the duck recurred to him. Down-stairs he could hear feet coming and going, an occasional muffled bark, and the murmur of voices in the dining-room. A friendly aroma of coffee came from the stairway.

"I hope I'm not late!" he thought as he hurried into his clothes, apprehension gripping him by the throat lest by a few moments' delay he should lose something.

They had nearly finished breakfast when he entered, including Diana, but Devereaux insisted on sending out for fresh coffee.

"You'll find it bitter cold in the blinds," he said. "You'd better stoke your engine well before you start."

Outside in the heavy mist loomed the shadows of keepers, "duckmen," dogs, and boys carrying guns, ammunition boxes and baskets, and stumbling over one another with politely uttered imprecations. A ghostly line of wagons, a lantern suspended from each rear axle, stood in waiting, and one by one each guest clambered in beside the shrouded driver and pulled up his buffalo-

robe, while an under-keeper shoved in the lunch-basket and cartridge-box and scrambled up behind.

Maitland had gone to bed elated at the thought of having Diana alone to himself the next day. But in the frosty air of the four-o'clock reality he felt ill at ease. Silently they took their seats in the last wagon. The driver clucked to his unseen horse and they moved off into the darkness. The wind had dropped and thick fog covered the earth with a motionless pall. Lloyd could see nothing, save the gigantic shadows cast by the horses' legs stalking among the bushes ahead of them.

"The Tarn ought to be all right," said the girl in her hoarse, fluty voice, which seemed startlingly close. "They'll be coming in on the wind and take the first water they see. It's devilish cold!" And she kicked her feet together.

It grew no warmer as they proceeded, first plunging through the impenetrable blackness of the oak woods, and then emerging upon the high ground where here and there through holes in the mist they could see the stars. Presently they descended toward the shore. The moon had gone down now, and again they lost the stars. The road turned to sand in which the steel tires crunched against shells and the desiccated skeletons of crabs.

Then without warning they stopped. A figure stood in the road before them. The under-keeper was already removing the lunch-basket. The figure beckoned, and climbing over the wheel they followed him down the road, and thence along a path through high grass to the beach. The lantern had been left behind. The darkness was opaque. Almost at their feet Lloyd could hear the lapping of waves as grasping the guide's coat he felt his way to the blind. Somewhere out in the night the decoys were quacking sporadically.

"Here, miss!" whispered the duckman, parting the rushes of the entrance, and Lloyd gave her a hand past him. He felt himself standing on wood, surrounded by some invisible barrier. Behind him was a seat made of a single board upon which the girl had already taken her place. The under-keeper fumbling with the lock of the cartridge-box shoved it between them.

"Anything you want, sir? I've left lunch with the duckman."

Then they were alone in their strange intimacy—Antony and Cleopatra—within two inches of each other in darkness appropriately Egyptian. He had an almost uncontrollable impulse to move his hand and touch her, if only to see if she were really there, but shyness restrained him. Once the board creaked as she rearranged herself. He became drowsy. Presently the seat trembled and he heard a sound as of metal screwed against metal, followed by a liquid gurgling. The pungent odor of whiskey filled the blind. His leg was pinched.

"Have a drink?"

He felt along her arm to her hand and guided it, still holding the flask, to his mouth. Her fingers brushed his cheek almost in a caress. The liquor permeated his being and restored his confidence. A light breath stirred the reeds, and looking upward he discovered that he could see the sky, in which the stars were now but paling points. There was a difference in quality between the two horizons. Shadows diffused themselves. Unexpectedly he perceived the reeds in front of him and saw the mist like a luminous cloud of smoke lifting about the blind. His eyes refused to focus in the unreality of this phantom world. It was still dark, but silver;—dawn, yet not dawn.

"Ssh-ssh! Ssh-ssh!"

It was the ghost of a sound like the echo of the faintest hiss.

"Ssh-ssh! Ssh-ssh!"

Again his leg was pinched.

"One's coming!" breathed the girl. "He's yours!"

The whisper of wings grew loud and faster.

"Ready! Or you'll lose him!" she muttered.

Fifty yards away a gray spectre shot from left to right through the mist and was gone.

"Quick!" she ordered. "He's turning! Now!"

But Lloyd's numb hands refused obedience, and before he could bring his gun to his shoulder Diana had sprung to her feet and fired—once. A heavy splash—a momentary flapping—silence. The reek of powder hung all about them. Lloyd turned slightly faint. The duckman, his outline now clearly visible, waded slowly out and drew in the duck with a long net. Then he vanished.

"May I borrow your flask?" asked Lloyd. Something in his voice made her look at him.

"Certainly. Anything the matter?"

"Nothing."

She bent over and peered into his face, as she took out her flask.

"Are you gun shy?" she demanded.

"It's the smell of the smoke," he answered.

In truth there had risen before his eyes the vision of other misty mornings in the ravines of the Argonne.

"Were many of you like that?" she asked curiously.

"I can only speak for myself. I never went into a fight that I wasn't scared sick. I don't like killing people."

Suddenly she bent over and drew him down.

“Steady. There they come—a squadron. Pull yourself together!—Now, bore ’em!”

By noon they had killed nearly their limit. The sun had come out bright and hot, and only an occasional bird answered the decoys to fall an inevitable victim to the girl’s closely choked left barrel. They lunched among the scrub-oaks of the hillside behind them, on cold pheasant, pimento sandwiches, claret and hot coffee, and then lay among the leaves smoking their cigarettes and looking across the silver mirror of the Tarn fringed with the maroons and yellows of autumn to the High Ground with its great patches of red and russet—remote as if on a desert island.

Diana had cast aside her leather coat with its collar of gray squirrel and was leaning back against a tree-trunk, her blouse thrown open at the neck to catch such slight zephyrs as might be stirring. In the unrelenting sunlight her neck and bosom were as white as beneath the shaded candles of the manor-house. Stretched at full length beside her with his arms behind his head, Maitland felt again the witchery of her smile, the lure of her full lips. Puritan that he was at heart he was ashamed of the wave of passion that swept over him.

Diana herself was not unconscious of the effect that she produced upon him. In his civilian clothes of the night before he had not struck her as more than ordinarily good-looking; but now, brown-red from the wind and the sun’s glare, in the worn khaki uniform that he had put on for a shooting-suit, with his eyes fixed hungrily upon hers, she discovered that he was handsome. She liked his wide, slow smile, his reticence which was coupled to a frank warmth of heart and an almost naïve enthusiasm quite foreign to her own character. She would have liked to smooth back the curly brown

hair just where it ran into the peak in the middle of his forehead; perhaps to give him a kiss. And she might have done so at that, had he been some one else. But because it was Lloyd something prevented her from doing so. He, even more, longed to rest his cheek against her hand; to press his lips to its open palm. Then in the midst of the riot his blood was making in his throat and ears he heard Mr. Pepperill's crisp old voice.

"A wrong 'un! Give her plenty of room!"

He dug his fingers into the sod. Was that what she was? "A wrong 'un!" She looked it fast enough with her queer eyes and smouldering hair. He had seen the evidence of it himself—the caress that had passed between her and Devereaux! It was no idle jest to call him "the lord of the manor." And he had boldly insisted upon all "his privileges"! What were they? Ugly thoughts came crowding into Maitland's brain. Had he saved Devereaux's life that the capitalist-aviator might have this wonderful young creature for a mistress? If so, he were better dead—and "stuffed"!

"Yonder's where they found Blackbeard's treasure!"

Diana waved her cigarette lazily toward a distant cove. He did not reply. He was not interested at that moment in treasure of gold and silver.

"A great iron box," she went on, "full of moidores and pistoles, and Spanish doubloons, and pieces of eight. The black cross marks the place. It's a matter of court record. It was all delivered up to the state authorities as treasure-trove."

The claret—or was it something else?—was making his ears sing a little. Well, if she was Devereaux's, he'd let her see that she couldn't deceive anybody.

"Not kept, then, as one of Larry's feudal perquisites?" he asked significantly.

At his words a red tide swept upward from her throat to her hair. Furious, she scrambled to her feet; he did the same, and they stood motionless face to face. Diana clenched her fist and drew back her arm. Another instant and she would have struck him in the face. Then at the sight of his bloodless cheeks her hand slowly lowered to her side. Something beyond herself restrained her. He had insulted her—degraded her. And yet—! After all, as she realized, she had given him full reason for his opinion of her. The abjectness of his contrition touched her. He had bowed his head and stood waiting for the blow. Her eyes softened. He raised his face—drawn with regret.

“Oh!” she gasped. “How could you!”

Disregarding every tradition and habit of his life, he did what he could have done to no other girl under like circumstances, he gathered her in his arms and kissed her forehead—her eyes—her mouth!

“Forgive me!” he cried. “Forgive me! I’m sorry—sorry—sorry! Say that you forgive me—Diana!”

She let him hold her—head thrown back, lips slightly parted, eyes closed—for one heavenly moment.

“I—forgive—you!” she whispered.

CHAPTER VIII

"WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?"

THE afternoon that Diana and Maitland had shot from the same blind at Treasure Island, Mrs. Kayne, "stopping in" at the house for a moment after lunch at the Croyon before hastening on for bridge at Mrs. Brice-Brewster's, met her daughter Sheila unexpectedly upon the stairs. The girl was coming down on the run and the bizarre patch of artificial red in either cheek was surrounded by a charming glow of natural color.

"Hello, Moms!" she cried, panting as she paused in her descent.

Her mother, also slightly breathless, although from another cause, regarded her disapprovingly.

"Where on earth are you going at such a rate, Sheila? I do wish you'd be more dignified. What do you suppose the servants think of your ramping around like that?"

She glanced down over the banister at the broad back and tonsured head of Jarmon, the butler, who was looking out through the Venetian lace of the front door. Mrs. Kayne spent much of her time wondering what the servants thought, but, as she never found out, she was not unduly disturbed.

"Bosh! Who cares what they think!" retorted Sheila. "It's good exercise! I'm going to the movies—we've just time for the second show."

"Who's *we*?" demanded her mother suspiciously.

"'Chubby' Jones."

"Are you two going alone?"

"Of course! Why not?"

Mrs. Kayne drew in the corners of her mouth.

"Who is this 'Chubby' Jones, as you call him?"

Sheila rolled her eyes ceilingward and then dropped her lids wearily, thus registering both astonishment at such ignorance and disgust at parental interference.

"Friend of mine. I met him at a dance last week. He's horribly nice. He's giving me quite a heavy rush."

"But who is he? Where does he come from?"

"How should I know?" replied the girl blandly. "He must be all right. He goes everywhere. Invited to all the smartest parties. And he's got a Stutz."

Mrs. Kayne uttered a sigh of pathetic protest. Such goings on genuinely offended her idea of good taste, for she had difficulty in bringing herself to believe that the right people really allowed their children so much freedom.

"I don't like it! I won't have it!" she declared with a show of firmness. "I can't let you go into those places and sit all the afternoon in the dark with a strange boy!"

Sheila stamped her foot.

"He's not a strange boy!" she retorted. "You don't understand. Everybody does it. All my friends go with 'Chubby'—and with other boys. Please let me get by!"

Mrs. Kayne stared at her helplessly.

"I don't believe their mothers know about it!" she protested vaguely. Sheila caught her up.

"Know about it? Of course they do! Ask Mrs. Brice-Brewster. She knows. She lets Frances do it. Now, mother. Do let me by! Chubby is out in the car, and he mightn't wait for me if I keep him too long."

"What other girls that you know go to the movies

with this Jones boy?" continued her mother feebly, but still in the ring.

"Everybody. He's all the rage. Jennie Talmage, Rose Wynant, and Priscilla Blair—all of them!"

"Well, I don't approve of it at all. I *wish* you wouldn't. Just to please——"

"But, mother!" cried the girl, almost beside herself. "If I didn't go with Chubby he'd think I was a dud. Don't you want me to be popular? We have to do all sorts of things or the boys won't dance with us. Going to the movies is nothing. Really, mother, you're too old-fashioned! Please, mother, don't keep me any longer!"

She spoke wildly, her lips quivering, her whole body a-tremble. Mrs. Kayne was afraid the girl might have hysterics right there in front of Jarmon. He had heard the whole conversation, anyway.

"Well, dear," she said soothingly, "if you're quite sure all the other mothers—including Mrs. Brice-Brewster—let their daughters do it, I suppose I mustn't object. But really——"

Sheila was already half-way down-stairs.

"I do wish you'd find out something about this Jones boy," finished her mother distressfully.

"I will!" Sheila tossed over her shoulder. "But why don't you look in the Social Register?"

Sheila took the three bottom steps at a leap, almost knocking down Jarmon, who was solemnly holding the front door open for her, and caromed through it with a shrill cry.

"Coming, Chubby!"

The door closed behind her. Mrs. Kayne uttered a deep suspiration largely for the effect on Jarmon and continued her somewhat laborious ascent. She never used the elevator for one flight—as a matter of principle.

It was part of her regimen adhered to rigorously, ever since she had learned that the beautiful Mrs. Cyril Northrup—the one who had visited Mrs. Absolom at Northampton the summer before last—never used the elevator for one flight and took only an orange for her lunch on Thursdays. But although Mrs. Kayne in consequence had religiously eaten nothing at luncheon save a single orange for upward of one hundred and twenty Thursdays, for some peculiar reason the effect upon the two ladies was not the same.

She had been the only daughter of Cephas Hargeth, a wealthy and religious stockbroker of excellent social position—he later was indicted by a runaway Federal Grand Jury for “bucketing,” but never tried—and it was commonly thought at the time that young Kayne—then twenty-eight—had done very well by himself in getting her to marry him. At any rate it had certainly been a step in the right direction. And it had been immediately followed by another, the purchase of the summer place at Northampton to which all those who did not feel quite up to Newport were then flocking.

Her one ambition was to be fashionable, and she gave her daughters fashionable names—Diana, Claudia, Sheila. Had Elizabeth Hargeth been a cleverer woman their ascent would have been less deliberate, but although she had been a Tuxedo belle with a marvellous complexion—which in spite of squirrel cheeks and an oversharpe nose had won her a reputation as “that pretty Lizzie Hargeth”—she was remarkable for dulness in a generation which made of dulness a religion. Since, however, it had even a greater reverence for money they progressed rapidly enough.

As Kayne’s financial importance grew and he became a popular figure upon the local golf-links—it cost him

several thousand dollars to learn the game under proper auspices—the quality of their dinner guests likewise improved until they really knew everybody. By the end of ten years practically all Northampton was dining at the Kaynes' and dining well. At the conclusion of another like period Lizzie Hargeth, now a matron of forty-five, could look down the rows of smoothly upholstered female bosoms and gleaming shirt fronts at her mahogany and know that they belonged to the best people not only on Long Island, but in New York City as well—Newport or no Newport! Rufus even had his little joke about what he called "the Pittsburgoisie."

As time went on, Mrs. Kayne, like many another of our best ladies, realizing perhaps that the walls of society will not fall down of their own accord, adopted, when away from her own fireside, a slightly assertive and even aggressive manner, which entirely belied her innately gentle and retiring nature. She had, in reality, so little self-confidence that she was apt to decide most questions by asking what other people were doing, and doing the same. Thus it was quite enough for her if her friend Mrs. Brice-Brewster—particularly since she was so closely related to a man of Mr. Vincent Pepperill's position—approved of whatever was under discussion, wholly irrespective of its nature, and whether material or spiritual.

She was by no means a fool, but although she might have improved her mind after graduating from school, she had allowed it to lie fallow and she had so small an amount of imagination that, once having achieved a satisfactory place in society, she had, so to speak, dug herself in, rarely even taking the chance incident to adding a new name to her list, and preserving her dinner cards and using them over again year after year, with

the result that as her mind worked with regularity, her guests found themselves inevitably in the same general company and usually between the same table companions as when last invited. She was placid, nerveless, kindly, her favorite color was terra-cotta, and she was passionately fond of emeralds.

Yet, when all is said, under the crust of pretense and conventionality the heart of this simple and well-meaning woman yearned deeply to her children and was often torn by her inability to understand them.

She loved her husband, without romance and without passion, believing him to be the best and truest of men, ignorant that she bored him or that her cackling laugh drove him nearly frantic. Yet after the first three months of married life she had ceased to make any effort to render herself personally attractive to him, assuming that having consented to be his wife all that it was necessary for her to do to keep alive his interest was to eat her meals in his company and occupy an adjoining bed chamber.

Mrs. Kayne was surprised at many of the things which she understood were done by the younger people in society or just entering it. But as her ambitions for her children were exactly what her own had been, she was not so much worried by the things themselves as by whether they were actually being done. At first when the new style of dancing made its appearance she had vehemently objected to it, but presently finding herself in the minority she speedily ran to cover and kept her peace. It may be said in her defense that, since whatever is unmannerly, illegal, or even criminal is supposed to derive its character in that respect from the prevailing public opinion, if the majority of us are willing to caper about naked to the beating of the tom-tom

it thereby becomes the proper thing and all one needs to do is to count noses to learn how to behave.

Mrs. Kayne always counted noses and acted accordingly, and it is to be suspected that sometimes, if the result was not precisely to her satisfaction, she went back and counted them over again. After all, it is not the number of noses that matters so much as to whom they belong. Mrs. Kayne found ample precedent among the best people for letting her children do exactly as they wished. They would do it, anyway, she said, so, after all, what difference did it make? It was reassuring to know that they were in good company.

Yet somewhere in the back of her mind lurked a feeling of uneasiness—the ghost of the soul that has to live with itself. She knew that she had never done things like that. And she could not remember ever having defied her mother. But her own children once out of her sight made no pretense of obedience, and she had long since abandoned any real attempt to enforce it upon them. To do so would have taken all her vitality, and, after all, one must live one's own life a little of the time!

Actually her life was consecrated to bridge-whist, which, being to a considerable degree a matter of rule, she had learned to play fairly well at a cost but slightly exceeding that of her husband's golf. Had she but realized it her interest in the game was largely due to the fact that it was the only exercise her mind received, it being led out, as it were, for a brisk canter round the track afternoon and evening, and the rest of the time left munching in the stall.

That was her life; luncheon with from seven to eleven other women from one-thirty to three-thirty; and bridge from four to six, which fitted in nicely with Rufus's

engagements at the "Corner Store" and the Turkish bath. In the evening she had, of course, her regular social duties to perform in addition.

She had returned for her purse, a necessary adjunct to her game, which she had forgotten, and having secured it she descended to the front hall where the butler, now reinforced by a tall young footman in white silk stockings, bowed her out with ceremony. Mrs. Kayne was a great stickler for form and for many years had had a butler who had scored heavily when first interviewed by inadvertently addressing her as "My lady."

The young footman—Capper—who had served three years in Flanders and wore a silver plate in his skull, from which he suffered constant headache, adjusted the lace over the door, turned, and busied himself with the coats upon the table, to hide the fact that he was feeling very ill; for Mr. Jarmon was not a sympathetic man. He was firmly persuaded that the young footman drank.

Mrs. Kayne, relieved of the momentary problem presented by Sheila and young Mr. Jones, entered Mrs. Brice-Brewster's with a tranquil mind. She and that lady were kindred spirits, astonishingly alike in most particulars, as were the other six ladies of fashion there assembled. Much of their pleasure in one another's society lay in their knowing beforehand exactly what everybody was going to say. There was none of the awkwardness incident to the introduction of foreign topics such as politics and literature, always possible—if improbable—in mixed gatherings.

These good-natured ladies greatly enjoyed their tiny cushioned corner of life and had a real affection for one another. Being so much alike, it was only natural that they should somewhat overeulogize one another's vir-

tues, since by so doing each emphasized her own. For this reason they rarely disagreed with whoever spoke first, discussion being often annoying, generally fatiguing, and always useless. They were, in fact, like a small flock of fat pouter pigeons—punctiliously pecking at grain and cooing with contentment.

Each, as soon as she had married, had settled down into a life of indolence and become an old woman, passing at once from youth to age. For in the Victorian era there was no middle period, and a woman having assumed the bonds of holy matrimony became thereby shackled to the rocking-chair. They had awakened from their twenty-year postmarital dream to discover that, save for themselves, there were no longer any old women, and, perceiving with dismay that their husbands were still comparatively young, they had hastened to rejuvenate themselves so far as decorum permitted.

In Mrs. Brice-Brewster's set, however, where the sense of propriety was strong, this did not go beyond a slight affectation of light-mindedness, an occasional cocktail, and an attitude of toleration toward conduct which a few years before they would certainly have regarded as disgraceful. And none of them, although they followed the fashion of short skirts, had gone so far as to take up dancing.

It is not astonishing that their husbands found their companionship tiresome and sought amusement away from home when possible, that their children regarded them as relics of mediævalism and their servants as geese stuffed with chestnuts.

Mrs. Kayne, already a few minutes late, hurried in, fluent with apology, to find the company engrossed in discussing the very subject last pressed upon her attention.

“We were just saying, Lizzie dear,” said Mrs. Brice-Brewster, “that there seems to be absolutely no way to control children nowadays. They are simply running wild. Parents don’t seem to have the slightest influence any longer. Take the Mothers’ and Fathers’ Guild, for example. We all joined it three years ago and we thought we could do something by concerted action. But what happened? None of the children would go to any of the plays the Guild recommended, and in fact they all insisted on going to those it disapproved of.”

“What do you expect?” asked Mrs. Percival Ray, who had a twenty-year-old daughter already divorced and hence adopted an aggrieved attitude for the purpose of showing that it was not her fault. “It’s the whole world. The war has destroyed all our ideals—everything!”

“I don’t think the plays matter so much—they’re bound to see everything, anyway,” said Mrs. Kayne.

“Exactly,” agreed another lady. “I don’t think the plays matter. It’s so hard to tell what they mean, anyway. One person will find a play moral when another will think it immoral. And they get all the same sort of thing in the papers. One can’t keep one’s children from reading the papers, can one? One *wants* them to read them.”

“And novels!” added Mrs. Kayne. “They get it all in the novels—even the very best. Take the ‘Scarlet Letter,’ for instance, I mean the classic—by Hawthorne.” She spoke as one bowing—or having bowed—to the inevitable.

“Anyhow, I’m told that last party at the Rumpels was a public scandal,” continued Mrs. Brice-Brewster. “In the first place, ever so many boys came who hadn’t been asked, and most of them brought their

flasks. Then they put the lights out and smashed half a dozen mirrors and a lot of furniture; and after that they played hide-and-seek all over the house. Mrs. Rumpel found two couples in the cellar and several in the servants' bedrooms. And a lot of the girls egg the boys on. I don't mean that any of ours do, but daughters of people we know. I understand they say they don't get any fun dancing with a man unless he has had something to drink."

"Well, what are you going to do?" demanded a lady conspicuous for her earrings, who was adroitly shuffling a new pack of cards by means of her thumbs. "You can't keep a girl from going to the dances. If you did she'd never know anybody. You can't keep her at home and get her married."

"That's the whole trouble," answered Mrs. Brice-Brewster. "Of course, the nice girls—ours—don't do these things, but even they complain that unless they do the boys don't want to dance with them. You really can't blame a girl for wanting to be popular. Nobody wants to be a wall-flower."

"It's the parents' fault," alleged a stout lady in green brocade, who happened to be childless. "They should exert a little discipline. Girls like that, who don't behave themselves, ought to be spanked."

"Oh, my dear!" expostulated the lady who thought that the plays didn't matter. "That would only make them worse. And besides— I'm sure you don't really mean that!"

"Yes, I do!" returned the stout lady resolutely. "When I was a girl I know what would have happened to me if I'd disobeyed my mother!"

There was an embarrassed silence; all felt that the remark savored of indelicacy. Then Mrs. Allison, one

of Mrs. Kayne's childhood friends, still domiciled in Tuxedo, said earnestly:

"Of course, I don't approve of much that goes on—not at all! I wouldn't for the world have any of you suppose that I did. But what I say is that I do want my children to have a good time while they can. I'm sure I don't want them to go through what I did when I was young. The world is a hard enough place to live in as it is!"

There was a murmur of sympathy from all of the ladies in the group, although none of them knew exactly to what Mrs. Allison referred, it being generally supposed that she had always lived in the lap of luxury. However, it was clear that the memory of something unhappy in the past rankled in her breast and it awakened in them a vague echo of response, based on their common juvenile experience of doleful Sunday afternoons.

"Why, I think most of the young people are perfectly well-meaning," said Mrs. Kayne. "After all, they are only trying to have a good time. Some of them will always be a little wild, of course—but that doesn't mean that there is anything wrong. And I *want* them to have a good time!"

Mrs. Brice-Brewster rose and moved toward the bridge table, and the others did the same.

"Well, shall we begin?" she asked, as she cut for partners. Then, as Mrs. Kayne hovered near her, she turned with a smile and said encouragingly:

"Well, it's nice to feel that *our* girls are all right, isn't it, dear?"

Mrs. Kayne smiled affectionately at her friend.

"What do you think of all these movies?" she asked confidentially. "Are you sure they're all right? For girls to go alone to, with boys, I mean?"

Mrs. Brice-Brewster gave her a slightly puzzled glance.

"Why," she answered, "I had my doubts at first. But when Frances told me that you let Sheila do it, I made no further objection. I suppose it's all right. After all, they don't take what they see seriously."

At that precise moment Sheila and her escort Mr. Chubby Jones were sitting in the dark, side by side in two "divans" directly behind another boy and girl in close embrace. The atmosphere was heavy with nitrogen and cheap perfume, while from the neighboring aisle came the stench of a dead cigar too precious to be surrendered by its owner. On the screen a girl, her gown half torn from her body, was struggling in the arms of a ruffian whose face was distorted in a grin of sensual anticipation. The gown slipped lower and lower as the pair rocked toward the neighboring couch.

"Hot stuff!" sniggered the man of the world beside Sheila, who, ignorant of the proper etiquette on such occasions, giggled awkwardly in reply—then shivered as she felt his fingers creep up under her sleeve and clasp her elbow. For an instant she doubted her senses. The mouthing face upon the screen was gloating at her in a close-up depicting "The untamable animal lurking in every man." The fingers stroked her arm and she sickened, waves of heat and cold chasing across her body. Feebly she tried to pull herself away. But he did not relax his grasp. They always pretended that they didn't like it at first.

Helpless—alone in this black prison—in a world apparently dedicated to lust—with only ignorant girls as ushers for protection—shrinking from the publicity incident to an open resistance—wanting her mother but realizing that she would not find her there if she

went home—she submitted. Writhing, she allowed his hand to fondle her, each instant feeling more and more polluted until she could have screamed, her face and bosom flaming with the consciousness that she had led him on, aping a sophistication not really hers but designed to pique and arouse his interest and trying to talk as she had heard Diana talk.

Doubtless he supposed that it was for just this that she had come with him. Tears of shame and disgust scorched her eyes.

“Nice arm you’ve got, Sheila!” she heard him say.

After all, perhaps that is what the movies are for. Was not “Onderdoncking,” as it was then called, known in the earlier Victorian era—even among high ecclesiastics?

CHAPTER IX

CHILDREN OF YESTERDAY

DIANA, eldest of the three children of Rufus and Elizabeth Kayne, unfortunate in her parentage, was fortunate at least in the decade of her birth, and the fact that of them all she had inherited most of her grandfather's vigor of body and intrepidity of spirit.

Her girlhood had been passed during her mother's "On to Newport!" period, when the Northampton house was filled with "hen-parties" at both luncheon and dinner—bridge after each—from Tuesday until Friday, and with aromatic golfers over every week-end. Fortunately for her this was also the epoch of the "athletic girl," so that being driven out of the house was tantamount to being driven upon the tennis courts and links, which in the "dull waste and middle" of the week were practically deserted. Had not motors been still an innovation she might have been driven onto Broadway. As it was, she scraped an acquaintance with a beach-combing family of summer Brooklynites whose harum-scarum existence would have shocked the society folk of Northampton had they dreamed of it—and learned from a tomboy girl and her two equally rowdy younger brothers to shoot snipe and duck and to land striped bass through the surf.

Somewhat later, at the childish age of fifteen, she had suddenly appeared one day at the tennis club and not only captured the women's senior and junior singles before a crowded gallery, but took away the clay-pigeon

trophy from one Mr. Richard Darcy who, since he had already won it twice in succession, had confidently expected it to become his permanent property. Sport may or may not have saved her, but at least it made her a celebrity, and next Sunday at "Treasure Island" Mr. Darcy sang the praises of the "red-headed child-wonder" to his friend Mr. Lawrence Devereaux, who, hastening to Northampton, became at once her slave.

But Diana was too interested in outdoor life to listen to sentiment. "I can wait!" he had decided, and purchasing her photograph from the art department of a magazine had hung it over his shaving-mirror. He waited—without result, although his devotion naturally won him Diana's friendship—nothing more.

Kayne and his wife perceived too late for their own purposes that the girl was a social asset, else they might have achieved Newport through her. She had become "the thing" while her mother was still wondering whom it was safe to invite to dinner. Poor placid Mrs. Kayne looked on in helpless wonderment as Diana took a single, graceful dive into the middle of the social pool, bobbed up, shook the water from her eyes and vanished from the family view. From that time on they regarded her with awe, envy, and disapproval on such fleeting occasions as they were vouchsafed a glimpse of her en route from the Everglades to Government House, Ottawa, or from some Adirondack lodge to Santa Barbara.

Then broke the war and everything flattened out. She kissed Larry Devereaux good-by in his aviator's uniform of the Lafayette Escadrille, for a moment fancying herself in love with him. But her circle was smashed and she plunged furiously into "war work"—canteens, pageants, officers' clubs, "drives," and all the rest of it

—returning in the meantime to an echo of family life which she found as tedious as ever. The silly female struggle for notoriety—the unproductiveness of wasted effort—disgusted her. In the scarce intervals of her work—at first at odd times, but later on more steadily—she began to read, amusing herself with politics and philosophy, and for the first time discovered the world of ideas.

The war ended leaving her flatter than ever. Then the component parts of her smashed circle reassembled themselves and it began spinning faster than before. And Diana, even more cynical, spun with it—desperately now, for what had before been theory had been demonstrated as fact. She knew that if men had to die they could die singing—that drugged by a vision of glory they would sacrifice themselves—but it was the heroism of fools or hysterics. Civilization was only a cloak, a gossamer one at that. Men liked to kill, to destroy. Life was a fierce contest—waged under grandiloquent and high-sounding appeals to “principle” for material ends. Men struggled among themselves for money just as the beasts fought among themselves for food—and the women battled for the men. Given the chance and guaranteed against discovery there was no one who would not take his price. Religion was a clever invention to keep miserable people contented. You took away a man’s life and told him he would get it back again—by and by. There were no future rewards nor punishments and everybody knew it. Sin, as she observed, was frequently rewarded with earthly blessings, and in fact most of the wicked that she knew flourished like the bay-tree.

Anything else was childish pretense, mere mockery. All there was—and even that might be mere illusion—

was the fresh breeze blowing across the moors or the stinging spindrift "from the rainbow round the bow," the taut humming line with a leaping salmon at its end, the smell of wood smoke under the stars seen through the pines, the stealing warmth of wine or the soft pressure of a man's arm about one's waist.

The war had undeceived everybody who thought differently. That was the real reason why people were letting their children have a good time while they could—before they died, or became crippled from disease, or lost their money, or married. Marriage! A ghastly joke—resulting in jealousy, hatred, or insufferable boredom! Not for her. Liberty was too sweet. Give her twenty more years of vigor in which to enjoy what there was to enjoy! And then let her die like a sportsman—asking and believing in nothing more.

Claudia Kayne—Lady Harrowdale—had never been formally introduced, but the social game had become an old story to her by the time the innovations of "cheek-to-cheek" dancing and the "shimmy" had added a momentary fillip to a war-denuded society. So she had been ready and waiting for Captain Sir Percy Harrowdale when his discriminating eye fell upon her at the dinner table of Mrs. Brice-Brewster, to whom he had letters.

That stalwart social warrior, flattered at the thought of entertaining an English officer who was also a baronet, perceived at once what a wonderful match they would make. This probably also occurred to others who saw them together, for Harrowdale, in his smart evening uniform of dark blue, was a striking figure and Claudia, with her Burne-Jones face and hair, no less so.

Visionary child that she was—already bored with her surroundings—she would have been an easy victim under

any circumstances, but Harrowdale's uniform and his air of supercilious, almost arrogant, distinction so captured her imagination that she could not conceal her infatuation.

Sheila, the little schoolgirl crouching on the landing and peering through the banisters, watched the course of her sister's romance with excited interest. She would have given a great deal to marry a soldier, but the boys she knew had been too young to go to the war, and when it was over she discovered to her infinite disappointment that the real heroes were all busy looking for jobs.

In one way the war had been of advantage to her and her contemporaries, for it had somewhat delayed the period of their social sophistication, yet this enforced repression had resulted in an even greater exuberance when they got their chance. Sheila was exactly sixteen at the time of the Armistice. The dam of restraint had burst all over the civilized world and she had been carried along in the swirling flood, while three of the four grim Horsemen still galloped through the sky.

Diana, from her ten years' superiority, stigmatized Sheila and her friends as a lot of little jackasses, but did not take their antics seriously. While her own relations with men had always been unconventional and easy-going, and while she was fully aware of the attraction she excited, there was little of the flirt about her. She would have resented a real liberty, as she would have resented any other insult. The majority of the men she met made love to her, but she took this as a matter of course and it left her cold. She had passed through life untouched by any real emotion until her encounter with Maitland the previous Saturday. Here was something new altogether.

As she dressed for Sheila's ball she found herself won-

dering whether he would be there. She could no longer nonchalantly take the position that he was free to think what he liked about her. She cared, and she knew that she cared. Yet if he was too blind to see, too stupid to understand her true character—well, there was nothing she could do about it.

As for Lloyd, the recollection of this strange girl had haunted and tormented him. It had been his first experience of passion, and that he had yielded to it at all humiliated him. He had been brought up to believe that any such yielding was a sin. He did not realize that love, whether sacred or profane—flower or weed—sprouts from a single seed, that the flower may wither and grow rank and that out of passion may spring a blossom of spiritual beauty. That much depends upon the watering.

When Maitland entered the Croyon he was conscious of an atmosphere of excitement hardly to be accounted for by the strong odor of whiskey in the crowded coat-room. Although things were in full swing Mrs. Kayne and her daughter still stood receiving on the upper landing. The girl's face was flushed, her dilated eyes shining, and it was clear that she was impatiently awaiting the moment when she should be at liberty to join the dancing throng about her.

That she did not recognize the tall youth who was coming up the stairs had no significance—she did not know a third of them—but she observed that he had a military air, and he was on the whole, she thought, rather handsome—at any rate, quite nice-looking. She had four categories, in one of which she instantly classified every new male—perfectly stunning, rather handsome, quite nice-looking, and simply awful. Then he smiled disarmingly and she put him back into the higher

rating, where he remained for nearly an hour, before being reclassified.

Mrs. Kayne returned Lloyd's smile with the fixed gleam of a lighthouse and allowed him to press her hand. He was merely the four hundred and fifty-first young man whose name had been vainly shouted at her against the din of the orchestra. She didn't know any of them herself and there was really no use of her standing there or of Sheila's doing so either, since the boys Sheila did know would dance with her anyway, and the others would do as they pleased, having, naturally, no oppressive feeling of obligation toward a hostess who had invited them in order to make sure of having enough men and who did not even know whom she had invited.

As was customary with those who could stand the price, the whole affair had been left in the hands of Mrs. Bougereau, one of the many "social secretaries," so called, who, perhaps because the field of interior decoration was becoming exhausted, had gone into the business of organizing juvenile society and could guarantee to deliver an indefinite number of dancing young gentlemen like shorthorns on the hoof, at what was, in effect, so much per head. That they were personally unknown to her or to her clients was a matter of indifference—since they usually, at least, belonged to families whose names were printed in the Social Register, and hence were presumptively quite all right. Thus Mrs. Bougereau for a substantial consideration not only relieved the mother of all the trouble and annoyance incident to introducing her daughter to society, but supplied the "society" as well.

Under our system of avoiding responsibility by delegating our duties to others whenever possible, the New York mother of 1921 no longer introduced her daughter at the latter's début to her friends but to a hetero-

geneous mob of juveniles patched up by the professional exploiter of society from the various "lists" supplied her by the *débutantes*. The girls jotted down such names as they could recall of any boys whom they had met, no matter under what circumstances, and when they could not remember a surname, if indeed they had ever known it, they used any available means of identification including nicknames or brief personal descriptions.

The lists furnished to Mrs. Bougereau contained such accurate and pleasing aliases as "Rough" Bangs, "Slick" Thompson, "the curly-haired man with broad shoulders who visited Ada Sims at Tuxedo—named 'Orange' or something," and "Smith—the yellow-haired one." But she skilfully interpreted them and forwarded the necessary invitations to those for whom they were intended.

By a convenient laxity of social standards, since tickets of admission were not issued, many young men in need of amusement came who were not invited at all, as did also, it must be admitted, a few of the opposite sex. The ball once over and the *débutante* "introduced to society," the galaxy of youth and beauty thus assembled dispersed until Mrs. Bougereau's assistance was required by some other mother who desired to advertise to the public that she had a daughter to marry off and could afford to hire a hotel for an evening. Thus Mrs. Bougereau became a sort of social clearing-house, and, once on her list, particularly on one of her smaller ones, since they were graduated, one's daughter was invited everywhere that the young were gathered together. On Mrs. Bougereau's smaller lists were the scions of all those who were expected to entertain extensively or who employed Mrs. Bougereau.

That capable woman had arrived early and had given

very definite instructions to the dressing-room maids, the men in the coat-room, and the head waiters. She wanted it positively understood—as she couldn't be everywhere herself—that no girls were to be allowed to go up-stairs without shoulder-straps and that, if the dresses were too low, Emma must stitch in some tulle of the appropriate color before they left the dressing-room. And no young lady should be allowed to take off anything. If any undergarments were discovered lying around they should be instantly concealed. Of course if the girls left them at home nothing could be done about it. Flasks were to be confiscated but returned to their owners at the end of the evening—she looked severely at the row of sophisticated domestics—*with their contents intact.*

She begged Rheinart, the captain in charge of the supper, to use discretion about the amount of “white grape juice” he served—if any table was too noisy he might even remove the pitcher on the pretext of refilling it and then not bring it back. The dance was going to be one of the high spots in her business career, and, while she wanted plenty of “pep,” there must be nothing that could offend anybody—that Geroud dance, where it was said they had passed around bedroom keys and one couple had been discovered under the piano—and that other recent costume party where each guest had gone as a character in the Stillboy case had started a lot of talk.

There was to be no “necking”—no skipping off on the part of any couple into the storage loft back of the music balcony. Rheinart must station a special man there whom he could absolutely trust to refuse all bribes—a real scandal would ruin her business. They knew what she wanted and if she got it they could rely on

her seeing that Mrs. Kayne treated them generously. Rheinart personally should break up any rough stuff.

Tall, angular, efficient, good-natured, herself a devoted daughter supporting a decrepit old mother, she was but part of a system, the object of which was pleasure. One emphatic protest to the mothers and she could have prevented much of the mild misconduct that went on. But she dared not antagonize the daughters.

Mrs. Bougereau realized that she was in a dangerous business from many points of view and tried to trim her sails to the breeze of public opinion. She would have been genuinely horrified had it been suggested to her that the Croyon ballroom was in the slightest degree a menace to morals. Yet it was, in fact, nothing less, although every New York mother felt quite safe in letting her daughter go to any entertainment given by the Kaynes. Mrs. Bougereau, whose digestion was good, took Mrs. Kayne's responsibilities lightly; and as neither the daughter nor the money to be spent was hers she did not worry.

As she had climbed up the stairs and gazed upon the work of her hands she had seen that it was good. The huge mirror-lined ballroom had been latticed and turned into a rose garden, with a platform at one end disguised as a "gazebo" or bower from which Mrs. Kayne, with specially favored friends, might view Sheila's social triumph. In an acre of polished floor were reflected a multitude of electric lights peeping through screens of flowering green. The contract—on which she took ten per cent—had been only twenty-five hundred dollars—and the job had been complete. The orchestra was already mildly jazzing "All I want is a little bit of love, a little bit of love from you!" The supper-room, into which she glanced, was a real tropical glade—thirty-five

hundred dollars. She felt a thrill of genuine pride—if only her classmates back in the Oswego Normal School could see it with their own eyes instead of merely reading about it in the papers!

Then Rheinart called her and she hurried back to the landing in time to receive the Kaynes—very distinguished, she thought, and Sheila—as she called her, for she called all the girls by their first names—perfectly sweet in white and mauve.

Rufus, stiff and self-conscious, nervously congratulated her upon her achievement.

“Looks very nice. What did you do about the champagne?”

“Successfully camouflaged.”

The banker started to light a cigarette but changed his mind in spite of Rheinart's lighted match.

“I trust everything will be satisfactory, sir,” said the latter, bowing low.

Rufus handed him a fifty-dollar bill.

Then everybody began to arrive at once—for the theatres were out. At a quarter to twelve they were still coming. Maitland, shoved along by an even later comer and knowing nobody, paused just inside the main doorway. In the centre of the ballroom stood a compact mass of boys, which, being constantly augmented, had gradually driven the dancers closer and closer toward the walls until only a narrow aisle was left. Many of the boys and some of the girls were smoking cigarettes while they danced, and he saw several lighted stubs tossed upon the floor without any effort being made to extinguish them by the boys in the “stag line.” A pungent aroma of alcohol floated above this group and mingled with the smoke arising from it.

These young gentlemen about town were intensely se-

rious—their time was valuable. Occasionally one of them would dart into the crowded throng of dancers, tear a girl from the arms of her partner, press her madly to him and drag her away only to lose her to another after a few yards. Then the dejected youth would re-join his companions and his eyes would resume their fiercely penetrating search. It reminded Maitland of a struggling mass of scintillating fish from which the trawlers were choosing the most toothsome. Sheila was among them now, followed by a crowd of insistent admirers, and merely stepping from one pair of arms to another. With luck a partner might manage adroitly to dodge all pursuers for a few paces.

The air was hot; the speed of the dance so swift that the girls seemed clinging to their partners' bodies merely to prevent being trampled upon, as one unhorsed might cling to a slipped girth; while a cynical drummer with a face like a snapping turtle drove them on faster and ever faster with a frenzy of whistles, yells, and catcalls, accompanied by the jangle of cow-bells and the crash of crockery.

Rufus, after having been twice mistaken for a waiter, at length perceived that his only function was to pay the bill and decided, as soon as the receiving was over, that he might as well slip over to the club for a game of bridge. It was not as if he were going to leave Elizabeth entirely alone, for by that time his brother James had arrived with his wife and daughter, his sister Bridget, with her husband Ward Mallory, had put in an appearance, and Mrs. Brice-Brewster had come in after the opera, escorted by Mr. Pepperill. Accordingly, having led the way to the "gazebo" and installed the party of adults beneath the rose-entwined lattices, the host made his escape, intending to return in time for the supper.

Mrs. Bougereau hovered in the background, retrieving couples who sought to lose themselves. A great hubbub came up from below, where the men congregated outside the coat-room. The overflow from the ballroom had swamped the landings and the stairs were crowded with girls ostentatiously smoking cigarettes with an air of arch abandon while their youthful companions tried to give the effect of being dashing men about town. In ordinary life they were normal boys and girls. But here in this artificial atmosphere most of them felt obliged to conduct themselves as they imagined chorus girls and roués would conduct themselves—and to fill their conversation with innuendo and what was referred to as a “warm line” of dialogue. The situation was for the most part due to a small group of supposedly “smart” girls who aped an air of profligacy which the others foolishly fancied that they must copy or be neglected.

It was Maitland's first dance since his return from the other side and it struck him as an extraordinary performance. No European cocotte would publicly conduct herself as some of these young girls were doing. Women like that had too much sense to advertise. If this was the “society” into which the mothers introduced their daughters, why not turn them loose on Broadway and be done with it?

He pushed through the throng and took his stand nearer the orchestra, where, if possible, it was less crowded and whence he could view the dancers to better advantage. And then among them he saw Diana dancing with Devereaux. They must have come there together! She passed at a distance, observed him, and faintly smiled, only to be instantly lost to view. Then unexpectedly she was just in front of him again.

"Well!" she cried, laughing. "Here I am! Aren't you going to dance with me? Don't you want me?"

Lloyd took her hand, nodding at his friend.

"Want you!" he murmured, reddening. "Of course I do! But——"

"I must be running along, Di," said Devereaux, releasing her. "Good night! So long, Lloyd!"

The sportsman's tall figure struggled for a moment against the current of dancers and was engulfed. Diana lifted her half-encircled arms as if to place them upon Lloyd's shoulder.

"Well?" she protested, "I'm beginning to think you *don't* want me!"

"I'm sorry," he stammered, "I don't know how to dance this—whatever it is. I'd ruin your dress!"

She dropped her arms and flirted her fan.

"Never mind!" she answered at once. "Then we can sit down over there with the old folks and watch the children. Aren't they funny?"

"I don't find them particularly so!" he replied as he led her toward the "gazebo."

She interpreted his note of disapprobation as a condescension.

"Don't take our modern Babylon too seriously!" she said, obviously intending to convey as well: "Don't take yourself too seriously!"

He saw that she was piqued and was sorry, yet neither then nor at any other time could he tell her less than the whole truth.

"I don't know that I could take it too seriously! It seems to me it's pretty bad!"

She raised her eyebrows slightly.

"Mr. Savonarola?"

"Oh, no!" he retorted. "Just an interested observer."

It isn't exactly what America went into the war to make the world safe for—is it?"

She did not know it, but the real reason for her resentment of his disapproval was her consciousness of his disapproval of her.

"It's democratic enough!" she laughed, in an attempt at a lighter tone. "Our system brings a girl into contact with nearly every sort of man."

"There's no doubt about the contact!" he muttered, as a couple cantered past them.

"Are you sure you're qualified to judge of us?" she asked sharply.

Her tone hurt him.

"Perhaps not," he answered. "I didn't mean to be discourteous. You asked me a question and I tried to answer it honestly. I might have evaded it, I suppose. But I didn't want to—with you."

She looked up quickly and her eyes softened as they had on the former occasion when he had asked her forgiveness.

"It is really a wonderful party!" he declared. An expression such as he had not before seen there came into her face.

"I don't blame you for being disgusted!" she confessed. "But they're not really rotten—just silly kids!"

The situation thus momentarily relieved was saved by the doors of the supper-room being thrown open at that moment. In the mad rush for tables that ensued Maitland and Diana, who had almost reached the "gazebo," found themselves deserted with the adults at the upper end of the ballroom. The James Kaynes and the Mallorys, having felicitated Mrs. Rufus upon the distinguished character of the entertainment, now took their departure, and as Rufus had not returned,

and as Sheila had made up a separate table of her own, Maitland was constrained to assist Mr. Pepperill in conveying the remaining Olympians to the dining-room, where, Mrs. Kayne explained, a special table with extra waiters had been reserved for herself and favored guests.

There was no longer any question as to the success of the party, and Mrs. Bougereau, who, all smiles, conducted them to their seats, admitted modestly that things were going very well. As the moments passed they went better and better, owing, no doubt, to Mrs. Bougereau's "camouflage." The tropic glade was soon thick with tobacco smoke and sickly sweet with the odor of food, whiskey, and toilet perfumes. Here and there a girl could be seen unconcernedly powdering her nose, combing her bobbed hair, daubing her cheeks with rouge, and using her lip stick as she sat among her companions at the supper table. The din was deafening. It was the supreme moment of the young.

Mr. Pepperill, sitting at his hostess's right, caught Lloyd's eye across the table and made his customary wry face. Diana watched him with amusement.

"I can't imagine what can have become of Rufus!" ejaculated Mrs. Kayne. "However—they seem to be getting along all right!"

At that instant, as if in confirmation of her statement, a boy at an adjoining table half rose and waved a flask in her direction. The girl beside him seized it and pulled him back into his chair before Mrs. Kayne had time to grasp exactly what had occurred. She was glad they were all having such a good time, she told Mr. Pepperill. Across the room Sheila, unable to eat a mouthful, sat in speechless ecstasy.

It was at about this juncture that Mr. Pepperill assisted Mrs. Brice-Brewster to arise and make her

adieux. Their departure, however, had no perceptible result upon the spirits of the company, which were already as effervescent as they well could be. And now from behind a screen of palms six saxophone players—"The Jazz Kings"—made up in exaggerated imitation of negro minstrels—filed in amid cheers of recognition and wild applause from the company, with whom they appeared to be on terms of intimacy. It was Mrs. Bougereau's final touch that gave the fillip to the whole affair. Everybody would talk about a party where they had champagne and the "Six Little Saxophones."

Twenty minutes later, the minstrels having departed, a new excitement arose. At one side of the room a long table had been set especially for the use of the "stags." This had been usurped by a very noisy party who, in spite of Mrs. Bougereau and Rheinart, became steadily more and more uproarious, until at the departure of the vaudeville artists they were attracting the attention of the entire room. They were now engaged in the gentle pastime of breaking the silverware in two and throwing it into a heap in the middle of the table amid shrill cries of joy. Rheinart expostulated in vain. They offered to break him in two and throw him in with the silverware. Mrs. Bougereau was at her wits' end. She did not wish to make a scene, but, really—breaking silverware! She had chaperoned some rough parties, but there had been nothing like this before in her entire experience. They might begin to throw crockery next! The girls, however, were thrilled. They called excitedly upon one another to look! That was "Snooky" Brown standing up with the ladle! Was he really going to break it in two? Oh, dear! Wasn't it awful! What a funny boy he was!

Lloyd was shocked, his sense of decency offended.

He had not believed such a scene possible. At a negro cake-walk, perhaps; but not at the formal introduction to society of the daughter of a respectable New York family at one of the supposedly best hotels in the city. These young bounders ought to be thrown out! Where was the host? It was really none of his business and he hated all scenes. He looked quickly at Mrs. Kayne, but her face showed only helpless bewilderment. The Brown boy, waving the ladle about his head, was yelling incoherently. At the opposite end of the table another boy with a sweep of his arm pushed the adjacent china to the floor with a crash.

Diana glanced meaningly at Lloyd. It was all the authority he needed. He sprang to his feet, crossed the intervening space and wrenched the ladle from the boy's hands.

"Get out, all of you!" he ordered.

In spite of their condition neither Mr. Brown nor any of his associates had any doubt that he meant exactly what he said. In silence the embarrassed boys made their way out of the room. Next instant there was as much noise as ever—perhaps even more, since everybody was discussing the incident in great excitement. Lloyd, rather white, returned to his seat.

"Thank you—Mr. Savonarola!" she whispered. "They were outrageous!"

"I'm glad you think so!" he answered grimly, pouring himself a glass of water. "I was afraid you might think they were only being silly!"

Diana laughed good-naturedly at the thrust. After all, it was not her funeral, she said. Mrs. Kayne still looked like a frightened sheep. She really didn't know what to think. In a way she was relieved, although she was not altogether certain that such Spartan methods

were really necessary. If only Rufus had been there—he would not have made it so obvious, perhaps.

Mrs. Bougereau was aghast. She wished that young man had not interfered. The boys would have quieted down in a moment or two—there would not have been anything left to break. Calling attention to it would only make for notoriety—and hurt her business. Rheinarth, however, heaved a sigh of relief and from behind Lloyd's chair muttered: "Well done, sir! Thank you!"

But it was Sheila who, coming across to where Maitland stood, thrust her hand into his impulsively and thanked him for having saved her party. He really had been perfectly splendid! Why hadn't he danced with her? Then she would teach him! And so, Mrs. Bougereau having just then by an inspiration directed the orchestra to start up again, she dragged the pupil away and refused to have her lesson interrupted for at least fifteen minutes.

Gradually, the sobering effect of the chastisement administered to Mr. Brown and his friends having worn away, the dance regained most of its original vivacity. Rufus, who had lost ninety dollars at bridge, having thus escaped at that slight expense the necessity of assuming the responsibility of preserving order, returned just as Lloyd was going away and, ignorant of what had occurred during supper, expressed much pleasure at finding him there. Perhaps he *would* do for Sheila! When Lloyd bade Diana good night at half past one, she said, with a quizzical laugh:

"I should think you'd feel quite like a member of the family! However, it can't be helped!"

At the foot of the stairs fifteen or twenty maids sat in a somnolent row, their heads at varying angles. They would all sit there for from two to three hours longer

waiting for their young charges to have just one last dance. A semi-comatose youth in the coat-room received Lloyd's check and accompanying half dollar as in a trance. One young gentleman—as yet unobserved by the eagle eye of Mrs. Bougereau—was lying prone on the floor behind the curve of the main staircase.

The effect of the grape juice had slightly worn off by two o'clock. At three another supper was served and at four-thirty, breakfast—consisting of scrambled eggs, sausages, bouillon, and coffee.

Sheila, exhausted to the point of semi-unconsciousness, kept on mechanically, staggering from one partner to another until the last bedraggled flapper had departed. She heard dimly the orchestra playing "Home, Sweet Home!" but she had no recollection of how she got to her own sweet home or into bed—where she dreamed of a perfectly stunning man who drove everybody down the Croyon's stairs and then carried her away in his powerful arms.

A few of the young gentlemen shook hands with Mrs. Kayne and thanked her for a pleasant evening, but most of them disregarded her. Mrs. Bougereau, however, was as lively as she had been seven hours earlier. Almost regretfully she watched one of the omnibuses sweeping up the cigarette butts. There were many—and in the strangest places! Then, having distributed largesse on behalf of the hostess among the maids, waiters, and other attendants, she donned her fur coat and entered her waiting taxi just as the east was paling behind the black bulk of the Grand Central Palace. Up-stairs Rheinart carefully looked around everywhere to make sure nothing was burning.

A fat black cat stole out of the storage loft and came tripping daintily down the balcony stairs precisely like

a lady, although she was really the commonest sort of cat.

"Here, kitty-kitty-kitty!" called Rheinart alluringly. But the cat ignored him, her attention being concentrated upon a crimson makaw.

The carpenters were already taking down the latticework from the walls of the ballroom and piling it in a heap in the middle of the floor. The roses were all withered.

Some three hours later Rufus, in response to the young footman Capper's knock, awoke and sat up stiffly to take the breakfast tray across his knees. Lying folded by the toast and marmalade was a copy of the morning paper and he turned automatically to the familiar "society column" opposite the editorial page. Yes, there it was!

"Ball at Croyon Hotel for Miss Sheila Kayne." In the middle of the sheet was a picture purporting to be that of his débutante daughter, but in reality that of a young person unknown to him.

"At a dance, easily the most brilliant as yet of the season, Miss Sheila Kayne, youngest daughter of Rufus Kayne, Esq., President of the Utopia Trust Co., was introduced last evening to a large but select gathering of New York's best society. The ballroom was exquisitely decorated to represent a rose garden in full bloom while the supper was served in a tropical grove where live parrots and makaws swung among the branches of exotic trees. Music was furnished by Joseph's Orchestra assisted by 'The Six Little Saxophones.' Among those present were Mrs. Kayne, Mrs. Brice-Brewster, etc. etc., the Misses Kayne, Brice-Brewster, etc., etc., and the Messrs. Brown, Black, Bell, Bangs, Bullard, etc., etc."

How had they referred to him? "President of the Utopia Trust Co." Suppose it had been his obituary and that was all they had said? But what more could they have said? What more was he? The affair had gone off well, anyhow. That Mrs. Bougereau was a clever woman. Not every one could have handled those reporters so as to keep that silver-breaking incident out of the papers!

Greatly relieved, he poured a smoking golden stream of coffee into his particular cup of Spode and reached for the hot milk. That Maitland fellow! Curious how he was always mixing into his affairs. He hoped none of the boys' parents would be cut up at their being put out. No use treading on people's toes. Personally he'd rather have let it go. By the time he put in the cream he had reached the conclusion that, on the whole, Maitland had been too officious. At all events Sheila was "out." Thank God, that was over!

CHAPTER X

KNIGHT ERRANT

LLOYD did not see the inside of the Kayne house until the week following Sheila's party, when he brought Nigel Craig there to confer with the banker regarding Lady Harrowdale's projected escape from England. The two youths had looked forward to the interview with interest, Lloyd since he hoped to see Diana again and Nigel because it marked the beginning of an experience that would fill for a time his otherwise empty existence.

Kayne had made the necessary arrangements to have a large auxiliary schooner in the neighborhood of the Isle of Wight at the time when his daughter Claudia might be expected to desire to leave England, and nothing now remained but for Craig to receive his credentials and start upon his adventure.

It was nearly six o'clock as they ascended the brown-stone steps, and they had hardly pressed the bell inside the vestibule before a motor stopped in front of the house and Diana came running up. She was smiling to herself and this gave the corners of her slanting eyes—bluer than ever—an upward twist. Against the glare of the doorway she did not notice the visitors until they had followed her inside. Then observing who they were she turned and held out her hand.

"Why, Mr. Savonarola!" she cried. "So you managed to survive your horrible experience of the other evening?"

Lloyd presented Nigel to her.

"We've come to see your father," he said. "I don't know—" he hesitated.

"Yes, I do know all about it!" she answered. "He's told me. It's splendid." Then, addressing Craig, she laughed: "Somehow I've come to regard Colonel Maitland as our family savior—'women and children first.' Capper, take these gentlemen to the library, please!"

"Shan't I see you again?" asked Lloyd.

"Do you doubt it?" she retorted. "You don't know half of us yet and the season has only just begun. Well, I must go and make my daily visit to grandfather."

With a nod Diana disappeared into the elevator. Nigel squeezed Lloyd's arm.

"If Lady Harrowdale is anything like her sister I shall owe you a debt of gratitude!" he whispered.

The young footman, having taken their coats, had started up the stairs and, as they followed, Maitland glanced about him with curiosity tinged with a slight amusement. The main feature of the house was its great entrance-hall lined with huge vases and its massive organ at the farther end, surrounded by palms among which glinted half-hidden statuary. This hall, large enough for dancing, was three full stories in height and surrounded by a carved gallery or "mezzanine" from which hung several huge tapestries of modern design. On one side rose the stairway, its newel post decorated with a bronze electrolier representing Mercury "new-lighted on some heaven-kissing hill." On the other were several ponderous tables. The floor was of pink marble. The whole affair was wainscoted in black walnut and inexpressibly ugly.

Mr. Kayne, who had evidently been waiting for them, arose, upon their entrance, from a heavy, leathern arm-chair and greeted them both cordially. He was anxious,

quite naturally, he explained, to meet the man who was to be responsible for the safety of his daughter and her two children—Lloyd noticed that he did not refer to himself as a grandfather—and to discuss the arrangements. He was evidently favorably impressed by Nigel's appearance.

Lloyd outlined the plan. Craig was to go straight to London, confer with Lady Harrowdale's solicitors, ascertain Sir Percy's personal movements, and, when notified of the presence of the schooner in the Solent, make himself known to Claudia in whatever manner seemed most advisable. The details of her escape were to be left entirely to his judgment. She was to make no attempt to take any of her possessions away with her. All her property rights would be safeguarded by her solicitors. It might all be accomplished in three weeks—it might, on the other hand, take three months. There must be no slip-up.

"I guess there won't be!" remarked Rufus, as he handed Nigel a packet of letters, including one to Claudia. "I guess you fellows are all right."

"Of course, I'll keep you informed of everything by cable," Nigel assured him. "Good-by, sir!"

"Good-by—and good luck!" answered Rufus.

Just then Sheila tripped in.

"I was up with Grandpa and Uncle Billy, and Di told me Colonel Maitland was here!" she called from the doorway to her father. "I want to see Colonel Maitland!"

"Here I am!" answered Lloyd. "But I'm sorry I took you away from your grandfather. I hope some time to meet him."

"Oh, he's got Diana," she protested. "Besides, I'm up there all the time."

Rufus introduced Nigel and after a few desultory words the two men descended to the hall, where the young footman, having helped them on with their coats, hesitated for a moment and then said:

"Beg pardon, Colonel Craig! But don't you recognize me, sir?"

Nigel glanced at his face. Suddenly he slapped the footman on the shoulder.

"Why, if it isn't old Capper!" he cried. "Good old Capper! What on earth are you doing over here?"

"Just earnin' a livin', sir," beamed Capper. "There's no work at 'ome, sir. An' this is all I know 'ow to do, sir!"

"Well! Well!" ejaculated Nigel. "This is a surprise. I'm off for England on Saturday, but when I get back I'll send for you and we'll have a good time talking things over. I'm living with Colonel Maitland. You can always find me through him. Glad to have seen you! Good luck!"

"Good luck to you, sir!" said Capper. The tears were in his eyes, as they shook hands.

Then he became a footman again and opened the door for them.

"One of your men?" asked Lloyd, as they descended the steps.

"Yes—my mess orderly. One of the boys from my village—my 'home town' as you would say over here, was with me all through the big show at Ypres. The night I got gassed he was bringing me up a brandy and soda through a communication trench. He stole the soda from the G. Q. M's. It was the time they blew up the big angle, you remember—and things were pretty hot."

"Yes, I remember very well," answered Lloyd as they reached the sidewalk.

"A shell knocked him over before he reached me about ten feet from where I was lying. The same squad carried us both back to the field hospital. When he came to, the first thing he did was to ask for the 'B. & S.' Didn't suppose any one else should have it, you know! Well, here we are—two of the eight hundred thousand casualties of the Paschendael swamp."

They turned down the avenue against the fluctuating current of pedestrians and paused with a knot of people in front of a picture dealer's. Unable to see what the attraction was, owing to the intervening heads, they were about to pass on when their way was momentarily blocked by a stout gentleman in a fur-trimmed overcoat to whose arm a Spanish-looking girl was clinging. Lloyd could hear her say something about "silver fox."

"Oh, shut up!" snapped the man with her. "Aren't you ever going to be satisfied! You want the earth!"

Three days later Nigel sailed, but it was over three weeks before his letter came, announcing his safe arrival and saying that he was in contact with Claudia's solicitors. He feared, he said, that the matter would take longer than they had anticipated owing to the fact that Harrowdale had temporarily developed a sudden and unexpected taste for domesticity and for the first time in eighteen months was sticking closely to home. This did not interfere, however, with his general habits. As the season advanced he would probably go up to London and give them the chance for which they were waiting.

Lloyd found life in the Irving Place establishment rather dreary. He would have liked to call upon Diana but she had not suggested it. He had not been invited

to Treasure Island again, for the season there was practically over and Devereaux had gone south to his shooting-lodge in Georgia. With quite unreasonable chagrin he learned from her father that Diana—with Darcy and Longwood, the same unfailing quartet—had spent the Christmas holidays there.

He was far too busy, however, to leave New York himself even had he been invited to be of the party, for Mr. Pepperill had placed him in general charge of the legal business of the Utopia Trust Co. This occupied all his attention. In consequence he was thrown constantly with Kayne and gradually found himself almost in the position of a financial understudy. Banking he discovered to be as fascinating as law, if not more so. He liked participating in big things—constructive rather than destructive, which latter he perceived his own profession so often to be.

But there was nothing to take him to the Kayne residence and his social connection with the family ceased abruptly until the latter part of January, when he received an engraved invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Rufus Kayne to dine with them upon the tenth of the following month.

CHAPTER XI

"PIRATE EMERITUS"

PETER B., now a white-whiskered, round-shouldered octogenarian, who spent most of his time reading detective novels and sitting on a bench in Central Park, had found his son Rufus everything he had hoped for. He had got rid of the "Zarazota" just in time to save his own reputation and to prevent Rufus from contamination; but it would, he confessed, have been better if he had sent him to one of those swell boarding-schools instead of forcing him directly into Yale without any previous social experience by means of a tutor.

However, the boy had done well enough. No one could say he wasn't a gentleman! Top of the heap! His wife a leader in society! His children carrying on with the richest people in the city. Rufus was connected with everything you could think of—museums, hospitals, charity organizations, international committees. A big man—known all over the country. Old Peter could hardly keep down a chuckle. Money had done it! And he'd made that money. That was on his naughty side.

But he had another—the side that warmed to the sweet breath of the first grass and the soft blue of the sky, when he sat alone in the "Ramble," his eyes half closed, his long knobby hands with their large blue veins folded on the paper in his lap, the hot sun pouring down upon his back and the cool breeze filtering gently through his white beard, as he breathed in the mysterious, life-giving magnetism of the coming year.

He knew that his time was nearly come—no matter what the doctors told him. They only wanted to jolly him along the better to stick him up. Eighty-one! He had beaten the allotted time by over a decade! Just as he had outdistanced the majority of men in their pursuit of riches and pleasure and excitement. He would be going soon—back to Brooklyn, back to the polished pink monument—and when he went the papers would deal generously with him, for he had given his money generously.

They would not mention the “Zarazota” or the “Aphrodite”; they would probably speak of him rather proudly as “a sturdy pioneer,” the “prototype of earlier and more virile days,” a “constructive force,” an “empire builder,” a picturesque figure in the financial world, who had done much for the art and public welfare of the metropolis, and who would go to his rest leaving behind him an example of unselfish devotion to the highest ideals of citizenship. Yes, they would! Not on his own account, but on that of Rufus! And he was responsible for Rufus, through whom his own name had been purged of calumny and derision. A good citizen! A good son! He had not been good himself, but he had left goodness after him. He had wiped out the stain.

He was glad that Rufus was a good man, a religious man. Queer how his own religion had come to him all of a sudden that time out in the Denver yards where he had sidetracked the “Zarazota!” The quartet in the blue uniforms and the dangling red ribbons, the lean man with the absurd flag, the fat one with the cornet, and the two thin girls.

Miss Flossie McCann and he had watched them interestedly from the back platform of the car where they were refreshing themselves with whiskey and soda.

The valiant four had come to convert the train-hands and quite a little crowd had gathered round them, not altogether jeering, at the quavering solo sung by the younger woman:

“Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high.
Hide me, oh, my Saviour hide—”

“Gee!” snickered Miss McCann, who had, as the expression was, been lapping it up. “Gee! Listen to the fool! Send her out a drink!”

But the tune—or perchance the voice—had stirred faintly some string in the lyre of the Pirate’s memory, recalled some other woman too long forgotten—with silvering hair, perhaps—singing the same hymn. A lump swelled in his throat and he felt blindly for the table flap and put down his glass.

The little band was kneeling now—alone—and the lean man with clasped hands raised above his head was calling upon their Father in Heaven, while the train-hands stood about awkwardly waiting until they should arise. This they did presently and the younger girl, the soloist, stepped forward and, with her pale face lifted to the crowd, began to speak. She was pleading with them, that was clear enough, and throwing her heart into it. Some one of the loafers made a half-smothered remark and there was a coarse laugh. The girl flinched, but only took another step forward, raising her voice.

“My friends,” Peter could hear her shrill interrogation, “do you realize that Christ died for you?”

“Gee, ain’t it the limit!” exclaimed Miss McCann. “No rest for the weary!”

The Pirate disregarded his companion. That girl had grit. To get a better view of her he stood up at the end of the platform over the couplings. Then he perceived that she had observed him and was coming toward the "Zarazota."

A strange sense of spiritual comradeship with her possessed him. It was as if the years has been torn asunder and his mother—a young girl again—were holding out her arms to him. In the neurotic, rather pasty face he saw the vision of a soul's emancipation. To the Pirate at that instant she was his mother, all mothers, the Madonna—a sacred, holy thing. Her sad excited eyes fell upon Miss McCann.

"Sister!" she cried eagerly, "do you realize that Christ died for you?"

Miss McCann, the victim of an unexpected and undesired publicity, turned a furious painted face down at her.

"Cut it, you fool!" she burst out. "Who do you think you are? Get out of here!"

The next instant the Pirate towered above her, his fists clenched, his face red with anger. She knew well the force of that fury.

"Get out of here yourself!" he roared. "Take your things and vamoze!"

He wrenched open the gate and the steps automatically fell into place.

Miss McCann gave him a single frightened glance. Quietly she went inside, returning in a few moments with a suitcase and parasol. He waited savagely until she had descended, then smashed the gate to again. The salvationist had disappeared. Without doubt she was lingering hard by to salvage what was left of Miss McCann's soul. The Pirate strode into the "Zarazota."

His eye wandered around the ornate gilded carvings of the "salon" with its rose-tinted cushioned arm-chairs. Something was working in him. Some hidden voice was speaking to him. He looked intently at the row of chairs. Was anybody there? Goose-flesh broke out on his body and he went into his stateroom and flung himself upon his knees by the brass bedstead that he had had installed there—an innovation—while the colored porter peered fascinated through the crack of the door. Without knowing it he found himself repeating "Now I lay me down to sleep—" the first and only personal prayer he had ever been taught. He stopped, feeling foolish. Then he bit his lips and with a sob buried his head in the rose-tinted satin quilt.

"I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep!"

From that day a change had come over Peter Kayne. Something had continued to work in him. The "Zarazota" disappeared shortly after the exodus of Miss McCann. He developed a fondness for revival meetings and underwrote the expenses of more than one travelling exhorter. But he was secretive and surreptitious about the business and never spoke of it to anybody—not even his most intimate associates. Practically no one but Uncle Billy McGaw, his half body-guard, half valet, knew the Pirate had got religion. It was a curious sort at that—not so much a combination of remorse and the desire to atone for his past performances, as a longing to feel as that girl's face had told him that she had felt out there in the Denver yards when she had asked him if he realized that Christ had died for him. He perceived that he had lost something, something that had once been his, and he hungered to find it again.

It was not at all the ordinary millionaire's desire to square himself with his fellow man, to re-establish diplo-

matic relations with the Hereafter, to pay his money now that he had had his run, as if life were a sort of trolley trip where, instead of “pay-as-you-enter,” the rule was, “pay-as-you-leave.” And it took no account of form, ritual, or creed. Occasionally when confronted by some ethical problem he would raise a puzzled face to Uncle Billy and ask: “What does the Bible say about that? Does the Bible say anything about that, Bill?” But usually his religion, whatever it was, bore no relation to conduct—it was merely a state of mind in which he saw himself as cleansed—worthy.

The tie between the father and son was singularly tender. In Rufus, old Peter imagined himself raised uncorrupted and was happy in his vicarious resurrection. He did not permit his memory to go back farther than the “Zarazota.” As for the children, he adored all of them—the defiant, wayward, Sphinx-like Diana—who, as a child, had always been asking “Why?”—with her funny smile, like that Italian picture, and her queer Chinese eyes that always shone sweetly for him yet held so often a mocking devil when her father and mother were speaking—a high-stepping filly—a wild one—but God bless her! And the dark-eyed Claudia—poor little Claudia, who had married that English fellow Harrowdale—a nice-looking chap—he’d never seen a girl so in love—or in love with love, whichever it was—he often thought of her most tenderly, although he had never quite understood what she said to him and took refuge in patting her hand with a “Yes, yes, my dear, I’m certain of it!” But his favorite of them all was his little sprite Sheila—the last one—the baby—the child of April—with her darting eyes and restless feet—who would steal behind him and clap her hands over his rheumy old optics and, when he guessed wrong on pur-

pose, would stamp her foot and cry furiously: "No! No! It's Sheila! You *know* it's me, Grandpa!"

He never tired of having her dancing about and ordering him to do this and that, until Uncle Billy would try to bribe her into tranquillity with a geological specimen from the big cabinet which she was too small to reach of herself—and he nourished her from his great heart, watching her grow, with a deep tremulous joy, daily into ever blither and more winsome loveliness. His little Sheila! His little fairy moonbeam! And every night he prayed a special prayer that God would keep her and watch over her and let no harm come to her—"for it would sure kill me, O God! Amen!"

He was fortunate that he had the companionship of Uncle Billy, his lifelong friend and retainer, else doubtless he would have been very lonely, for Billy's education was about on a par with his own, and the past afforded them an inexhaustible treasure of recollection.

Peter B., having no social ambitions and disliking all form and circumstance in connection with the obviously simple processes of eating and drinking—particularly with a lot of "cackling women"—lived with Uncle Billy on the top floor of the house and, when he wanted them, had his meals brought up on a tray. Sometimes he ate them and sometimes he did not, his lifelong habits in this respect having been inconsequential. He had a "grub-box" and a small refrigerator in which were kept milk, sliced meat, and fruit, and, with the assistance of powdered coffee and an electric heater, the two old warriors managed very well by themselves, often spending long days in the Park, subsisting, like the gray squirrels there, on what they could forage from peanut men and candy venders.

They knew the Park end to end, from the forest fast-

ness on the north where one may lose oneself as in a wilderness, to the sunken half-hidden ponds upon the south, where wild ducks wheel and settle within a stone's throw of the dust of motors and within ear-shot of the music of the Plaza's orchestra; they knew when the snow-drops came, and the forsythia, when to expect the first robins and blackbirds, and that elusive moment when the wistaria would flower; they had their favorite nooks for every season and for each shift of wind, and special benches whence from experience they knew that they best could view the little tragedies and comedies of bird and squirrel life.

They had their pets at the sheep cote and the zoo, were intimates of Angus the old Scotch shepherd and his collie Bruce, and with Snyder the wizard keeper, whose mere presence would calm the most unruly animals because in some occult way these recognized the fact that he was their friend; they knew the mounted cops, some of whom had lived, as they had, in the West and, like them, hankered for it still; they knew odd secrets shared by few, such as the hidden groves beloved of the Greeks and the glades which, on Sunday, held whole villages from Calabria and Sicily; the corner on the hillside where the anarchists had their secret meetings; and the bowers dedicated to both sacred and profane love. There were wonderful rock gardens—like the “Shakespeare”—Japanese waterfalls, dark, echoing caves where boys played “robbers and police” and where actual criminals had sometimes lain concealed for days; unfrequented mossy glades where grew rare ferns and exotic flowers; and acres of hothouses tended by expert gardeners.

It was a marvellous little world in itself, with its streams and lakes, its hills, plains, and woods offering a sanctu-

ary for a multitude of birds and small wild animals, its ever-changing human population speaking a hundred dialects, its feast-days and processions, religious and political, its herbariums, conservatories, and, above all, its great museum of art, filled with statuary and paintings and priceless treasures of ancient civilizations, where on wet days the two ancients would wander for hours, sometimes lunching in the cafeteria, but more often not at all, half imagining themselves armored knights of the Middle Ages, Japanese princes of the Samurai, or bearded kings of Babylon:—a principality not unlike that of Monaco without the gambling concession, where old Peter B., his pipe in his mouth, could sit enthroned on a certain green park bench of the Belvedere, with Billy McGaw beside him as his grand vizier, and let his eyes wander for miles over a beautiful fertile plain surrounded on four sides by distant mountain ranges of brick and mortar but dimly visible above the trees—like the Happy Valley of Prince Rasselas—and feel that it was his.

Seated tranquilly upon a bench he would gaze for hours at the tiny horsemen cantering along the bridle-paths, at the slowly sauntering pedestrians, and at the unbroken torrent of motors tearing ceaselessly along in both directions. He observed that the motors never stopped and never slowed down, while, except for the athletic gentlemen who, with expanded chests, sprinted “heel and toe” around the reservoir, no one on foot ever hurried; and once he called Uncle Billy’s attention to the phenomenon with the comment that folks who had autos never seemed to have time to enjoy themselves.

Thus the Pirate who had cut many a financial throat and forced many a man to walk the plank of bankruptcy, who at one time or another could have put his name to a

check for the price of a small kingdom, found the keenest delight of his old age in that which cost him nothing and which was as free to any tramp as to himself.

When business permitted, Rufus sometimes left the Trust Company early and, seeking his father out in his customary haunts in the Park, would walk home with him if the weather was fine or, if not, would take the old gentleman for a run up the Riverside in his limousine. It was during one of these latter trips in early February that the Pirate turned unexpectedly to his son and said:

“Ruf’, somehow I don’t like the way Sheila looks. Seems to me as if she must be doin’ too much with this goin’ out every night an’ all! She’s that nervous she can’t sit still a minute. Always hoppin’ up an’ settin’ down again. An’ her eyes look tired.”

They were whirring over the viaduct at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street. Across the indigo-blue Hudson the winter sun was dropping behind the snow-patched Palisades into a driftwood blaze. In front of them a huge sign exalted the merits of a certain well-known brand of cigarettes—“a shilling in London, a quarter here.” Rufus comfortably exhaled a lungful of grayish cigar smoke.

“She’s all right, father!” he assured him. “They’re all like that! It’s natural they should get a little fagged out—but it doesn’t hurt ’em. Sheila never gets up until nearly twelve o’clock and, even if she doesn’t go to bed till four, eight hours sleep is enough for anybody.”

Rufus, having made up his mind to give Sheila a good time, was not disturbed. He had no intention of having another marital fiasco in the family like Claudia’s. Sheila should have every opportunity to meet the very nicest boys of her age and set—the Kaynes’ set. A girl

came out only once. It cost something, but it was worth the price.

So Sheila had been provided with a dress allowance ample for a royal princess, furnished with a motor of her own, and supplied with two maids—her own regular maid and an extra one, whose sole function was to attend her whenever she went out at night, wait for her and bring her home. Each earned her pay, but Sheila herself worked harder than either of them, falling into her bed so weary that no amount of repose could possibly rest her aching limbs or relieve her frayed nerves.

So she staggered bravely on—doing a fifteen-hour day in a single shift in which her muscles, brain, and senses were unrelieved for a single instant. At times all feeling seemed to leave her body and she had the impression of being only a head—or rather the upper part of a head—floating through the air. And her conversation became that of a mere talking machine—into which she put the proper cylinder—"Dinner," "Dance," "Theatre," or "Tea," turned it on and let it go of itself until it ran down.

"All the same I don't like the way she looks!" insisted the old man. "Her color ain't healthy and she's got hollows 'round her eyes like saucers. An' she looks sort of yellow. I know we're all something like that in color. But Sheila's got a queer look. It ain't natural. I wish you'd send her away to the country or make her take a rest."

"Oh, she's all right!" repeated Rufus. "Don't be such a worrier, father. The season only lasts a few weeks longer and then she won't have anything to do but rest!"

The Pirate grunted.

“Do you expect me to swallow that, Ruf’? Don’t I know that as soon’s she gets through here in New York she’ll be skippin’ off to Palm Beach or Miammy an’ like as not to Californy?”

“Oh, I guess not!” said Rufus.

“Yes, she will!” prophesied his father. “Unless she drops in her tracks first, which sometimes I think she will do right up-stairs with me an’ Uncle Billy. An’ then, when she comes back from wherever she goes of those places, it’ll start in all over agin’ down to Northampton and Newport maybe!”

Rufus laughed easily.

“It’ll be all right, father! Don’t you worry!”

They rode in silence for some ten minutes.

“Well!” finally answered the old man with unconvinced reluctance, as they swung into Seventy-second Street, “maybe it will! But—I tell you she don’t look healthy! No, sir! She don’t look healthy to me!”

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST OF THE VICTORIANS

THE dinner-party to which Maitland had been bidden at the Rufus Kaynes'—"on February the tenth, nineteen twenty-two, at eight o'clock"—and the pleasure of which he anticipated with such eagerness—owing to his natural assumption that he would see Diana there—was, in fact, a biennial event savoring of what in ecclesiastical circles is referred to as a "fixed feast."

Those of us who keep any sort of written record, no matter how abbreviated, of those whom we have invited to partake of meat with us cannot fail to be impressed with the fact that most social gatherings are preordained or at least predetermined. We are not satisfied that our friends will "go together" simply because they come together or that they will enjoy themselves as united in a common friendship for ourselves. We never invite the Smiths with the Robinsons, or the Blacks with the Browns. Year after year we carefully bid the Smiths with the Blacks and the Browns with the Robinsons, and marshal our other guests into the Black or Brown group into which they naturally fall. By a similar process of natural selection, did we but realize it, Mr. Smith inevitably experiences the annual delight of having Mrs. Black assigned to him as a table companion. But he realizes it! Oh, yes, Smith realizes it! Who has not stopped short and shuddered while partaking of either soup, fish, or roast—at the sudden materialization beside

his plate of the ghost of his last year's dinner conversation evoked by some familiar pleasantry or phrase?

The James Kaynes, while privately accusing the Rufuses of worldliness, rather envied them their prominence and were nothing loth to reflect a vicarious social lustre by reason of the relationship. This was rendered less difficult owing to the fact that in Mrs. Brice-Brewster the ladies had a mutual friend, equally intimate with each, whose daughter Frances belonged to the same set as Sheila and her cousin Rachel.

The two families entertained one another at least twice every winter and on these occasions Mrs. Brice-Brewster, her cousin Mr. Vincent Pepperill, and the Reverend Roderick Thrum, the rector of St. Timothy's, were invariably present, for, although the Jameses were not members of his flock, they were glad to show their catholicity by including him and at the same time to add the little touch of distinction given by his presence. It was, in a way, like saying in so many words: "You know, dear Mr. Thrum, we really ought to belong to your church, but while we are with you in spirit we find it quite impossible at this late date, much as we should like to do so, to make another change."

However, owing to the activity of the Jameses in a multitude of civic and charitable enterprises, they knew Mr. Thrum even better than most of his own parishioners. Indeed, charity was to Mrs. James what bridge was to her sister-in-law; while Mrs. Brice-Brewster struggled with both, devoting herself to social-service work on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings and to cards the rest of the time. Diana, too, was usually included, since she livened things up and Mr. Thrum liked to sit next to her.

The Jameses lived in a house built by the same archi-

tect as the Rufuses and decorated by the same decorator, and a guest might easily have found himself in the wrong pew without realizing any mistake. And whenever Mrs. Rufus purchased anything new in the way of rugs, furniture, or motors, Mrs. James was apt to do the same, probably on the theory of preserving the balance of power and making an equal impression upon Mrs. Brice-Brewster, who, since she had gone out of mourning and now that the war was over, had resumed entertaining with all the pent-up appetite and enthusiasm of four lean years.

Sheila had loudly protested that she couldn't possibly give up an evening, but having put in a requisition for a new ball dress she did not like to be too recalcitrant, and finally yielded on the condition that her mother should ask that terribly nice Mr. Maitland who had been at her party. To this her mother had offered no objection, being glad to get either of her daughters to stay at home on any terms. For Rachel had been invited young Professor Carraway of Columbia—who had been excavating at Antioch and, although quite penniless and without any New York connections, was interesting and in the “distinctly good-looking class,” most parents feeling quite certain that their daughters would not elect a domestic career in Asia Minor.

The Mallorys, on their annual migration from the White Mountains via Lenox and Briarcliff to Hot Springs, Augusta, Palm Beach, and the other recognized feeding places for birds of equally brilliant plumage, and being momentarily at roost at the Croyon, Mrs. Rufus had regarded this as an excellent opportunity to kill them off. Not that they were not in every way acceptable, but Bridget, being a cosmopolite and spending much of her time in Paris, was apt to run to extremes in mat-

ters of dress and coiffure and sometimes attracted attention by her readiness to adopt fashions as yet hardly recognizable as such. However—you had to have them some time! And there was this to be said for Bridget, that she always talked and talked loud, which got things going. To Mrs. Rufus the great thing was to get things going, and to keep them going, and the louder the hubbub at her dinner-parties the better she liked it.

Besides, Bridget went well with Senator Krass, who, both because he was a member of the congregation of St. Timothy's and for the reason that he was heavily interested in the Utopia Trust Co., was a natural if not an inevitable addition to the party, being at the point in his financial career when, like the elder Kayne, he was about to shed the wolf hide in which he had made his position for the woollen clothing of a philanthropic sheep. Mrs. Krass was a sheep already.

She had also been fortunate in being able to get a representative of the old, established Graham family, Mr. Pepperill's pet clients, in the person of Mr. Homer Graham, a jaded connoisseur of art who possessed a fine collection of death-masks and an exceedingly bad digestion. To balance him she had asked Miss Antoinette Smyth, the popular settlement worker everybody liked so much; indeed it was often hard to tell exactly what sort of social work she was most engaged in.

Then there was little Doctor Follansbee, who went everywhere and had so much personal information that merely to talk with him gave one a feeling of vicarious intimacy with his patients among whom he numbered many of the smartest people in town. He would do splendidly for Cynthia Mallory who, although not out as yet, was so tall and had travelled so much that she seemed much older than she really was.

That made twenty—a very good number, and no one could say that it was not a smart party, the family element strongly diluted by church, state, the legal and medical professions, and society proper represented in the abounding personality of Mrs. Brice-Brewster.

Mrs. Kayne had hesitated about putting on her new terra-cotta dress, partly because her emerald stomacher did not go very well with it somehow and partly because she had wished it to make its first appearance at the opera, but Mrs. Brice-Brewster had seen everything else of hers at least twice. So she had put it on regretfully. Rufus was still up-stairs with his father, but he always managed to get down to dinner on time, breezing in with a “sorry-to-be-late-but-I-was-kept-down-town” air, so that she did not worry. In fact, Mrs. Kayne did not worry much about anything, except what Jarmon might think.

At three minutes to eight she descended to the drawing-room which had recently been done over in an attempt to modernize its previous walnut solidity. Over the fireplace hung a portrait of her in another terra-cotta dress done by Carolus Durand shortly before the birth of Diana. It did not harmonize very well with the pink-and-mauve hangings which Miss Lamb had selected for the walls—and for an instant she entertained the thought that possibly an artist could be found who could retouch the dress to match. Then Sheila came skipping down the stairs. She had just been up, she said, to pay her regular evening visit to her grandfather and he was anxious to see Mr. Maitland. Couldn't she take him up for a moment after dinner? Mrs. Kayne was seriously disturbed.

“Don't you see, dear, you can't do that sort of thing? It would be very marked! You have only seen this

young man once or twice! I hardly know anything about him except that he works in Mr. Pepperill's office. You can't treat him like a member of the family."

"But you let me go to the movies with 'Chubby' Jones and you'd never even heard of him!" argued Sheila, forgetting the method she had used to secure her mother's acquiescence as well as her resulting experience. Just then Jarmon appeared at the door, and the subject was dropped.

"Mr. and Mrs. Kayne—Miss Kayne!"

The two Mrs. Kaynes embraced, Rachel kissed her aunt, and James, a large, shining man, smelling of soap, took his sister-in-law's hand jocularly.

"And how's the society matron?" he exclaimed in a cheerful voice. "How does it seem to have a daughter who is out?"

"Hello, Edna! Hello, Rachel! How are you, James! Well, here we are again!"

Rufus had arrived, as usual, almost on time, a shade exhausted, but up to form. Jarmon reappeared in the near offing and discharged another signal gun.

"The Reverend Mr. Thrum."

A moment later the rector entered with genial sweep around the room as he offered a fat hand to his hostess and her husband and then turned to Sheila with a hearty: "Well! Well! Well! So we are out in society, are we!" and looked eagerly for Diana.

"Er—are we to have the pleasure of your eldest daughter's company?" he asked anxiously of Mrs. Kayne.

"Mrs. Brice-Brewster—Mr. Pepperill!" shouted Jarmon, standing aside to assure the lady sufficient gangway, for she was one of those copious women who give

the impression of getting behind their façades and propelling themselves forward by means of a rear drive.

"How *do* you do, Emily!" exclaimed Mrs. Kayne with as much solicitude as if her guest had just returned after a protracted absence abroad, although they had separated less than an hour and a half before. "Oh, how *do* you do, Mr. Pepperill!"

Mr. Pepperill, immaculate and discriminating, shook hands with each one. He hated such parties.

"Hello, Kayne, how are you? Glad to see you, Thrum. Ah, Miss Sheila—how charming you look!"

"Senator and Mrs. Krass—Doctor Follansbee—Mr. and Mrs. Mallory—Miss Mallory—Miss Smyth—Mr. Graham!" shot Jarmon from the doorway, a gun every second, for they were all coming together, it being now nearly ten minutes past the hour.

The Senator, a tall man with a face like an underdone ham, shook hands and having sighted the church immediately bore down upon it. He was seriously contemplating the donation of a new lectern. Bridget Mallory, strongly tinted as to cheeks and skittishly dressed in a costume that would have been suitable as gala attire in any state of the Balkan Peninsula, lost no time in annexing herself to Mrs. Brice-Brewster and introducing Cynthia, a grotesquely tall and rather supercilious girl, prematurely aged owing to the process of unnatural forcing to which she had been subjected and, as her mother intimated, to the fatiguing attentions of the continental male. In pale blue she suggested a heron standing high above the surrounding scenery.

"Professor Carraway—Mr. Maitland."

The room was already noisy as Lloyd crossed the threshold close upon the heels of the cadaverous young archæologist. But his eye searching among the various groups caught no glimpse of Diana.

"Glad to see you, Maitland!" exclaimed Rufus coming forward. "I don't suppose you know many of these people. Let me introduce you to my brother-in-law, Mr. Ward Mallory."

Maitland found himself shaking hands with a smooth-shaven little man in baggy dress clothes whose round pink head gave him a vague resemblance to a loosely rolled umbrella with a ball handle. He had no business to be there, he confided to Lloyd, as his doctor had absolutely forbidden him to go out in the evening. The war had interfered seriously with his regular cures and he was beginning to feel the effect of it; he appeared to take a feverish delight in imparting this information.

"Shall I announce dinner, madam?" inquired Jarmon in an agitated whisper of his mistress. "Miss Diana hasn't come down—I think she forgot and went out."

Mrs. Kayne endeavored to conceal her annoyance.

"Yes!" she answered after a moment's consideration. "You may announce dinner."

Jarmon accordingly walked out into the hall, waited a few seconds, and then, returning to the threshold, bowed in the direction of his mistress. Rufus immediately offered his arm to Mrs. Brice-Brewster, James his to Mrs. Krass, the Senator gallantly approached Mrs. Mallory, and the rest of the couples followed in accordance with the instructions on the little cards which Jarmon had handed to each gentleman as he came in. The rector being without his favorite partner, Diana, he fell in beside her mother and Mr. Pepperill, and the party moved in to dinner.

A momentary confusion was caused by Mrs. Brice-Brewster's absent-mindedly sitting down before the Reverend Thrum could say grace and by her futile efforts to get up again, which he disregarded with his

accustomed social tact. The Amen was followed by an audible gasp of relief as the real business of the evening began.

Maitland, who had only to let Sheila chatter on without interruption to make her entirely happy, looked around the table with interest as she gave him the names of the guests with a little biography of each.

"That's Aunt Edna over there—the one with the bright-red cheeks—Uncle James's wife. No, she doesn't put anything on them at all, I swear it! In the daytime they're purple—perfectly terrible. She spends all her time presiding at meetings. I heard her say she had three each week until April—has them in her drawing-room, you know. She's got two hundred gilt chairs of her own that she keeps in the basement."

In the pause, caused by the passing of sherry, he could hear Mrs. Mallory loudly asking Senator Krass how he liked living in Washington, which, since the latter lived in New York—his senatorial experience having been confined to Ohio—got things going excellently. The Senator and his wife were lodged in what was supposed to be the newest and finest apartment-house in the world—they paid twenty-nine thousand dollars a year for their duplex—overlooking the Park, and he liked to talk about it and about the high class of tenants due to the high rent. Everybody in the Senator's apartment-house paid at least twenty-five thousand dollars a year for the privilege of being there. Folks, he said, thought maybe the suites hadn't really been rented, but that was all wrong, they had—all of 'em, and there was a waiting list. It was a wonder where all the money came from! "Cave-dwellers— Ha-ha!"

Mrs. Mallory countered coquettishly in reply by shouting that she and her husband were "tent-dwellers"

—whether or not in those of wickedness she did not divulge. Yes, indeed! Apartments were much better than houses. It was so easy just to lock your door and put the key in your pocket and go away and not have to think about servants or anything, wasn't it? That was the great advantage of an apartment, but a hotel was even better—there were such splendid hotels now everywhere, weren't there?

The Senator agreed that there were many excellent hotels and inquired courteously which ones she favored in the summer. He went to Bretton Woods, had the same suite every year—there was good golf. Mrs. Mallory thought Bretton Woods delightful, but she liked the bridge at the Profile House—it was quite exceptional and the people unusually pleasant. They played every afternoon and evening.

Across the way pallid little Mrs. Krass, who assumed quite justifiably that the Jameses were fashionable, listened with tensely simulated interest to her partner's account of the great drive about to be launched for public swimming-pools in every city throughout the land. The motto "Cleanliness Next to Godliness" was to appear simultaneously on a hundred thousand hoardings all over the United States and national opinion was to be roused to the necessary pitch of giving by a skilled firm of publicity experts. It was just a question of money, James said. All these movements were just a question of money, and if you spent enough to begin with you would get it back and all you wanted besides. Mrs. Krass said it was quite wonderful and that he must be a great organizer—very executive; she knew about public opinion, because the Senator had done a good deal from time to time in that line.

At the end of the table Maitland could hear the rec-

tor's penetrating nasal voice decrying modern socialistic tendencies and Mr. Pepperill's laconic agreement. Opposite him, little Doctor Follansbee was telling a very funny professional anecdote to Mrs. James. Following Lloyd's impatient glances toward the empty chair to which his eyes were constantly straying, Sheila took occasion to eulogize her absent sister. She did not conceal her intense admiration for Diana, whom she thought the most fascinating human being in the world—yes, “perfectly wonderful!” although she clearly regarded her as well with a sort of delighted disapproval. Wasn't she “simply awful” to stay away? When it disarranged the table so? And on account of Mr. Thrum particularly, whose weakness for Diana appeared to be a family joke. Personally, she confessed, she did not like Mr. Thrum—he bored her to death. She couldn't imagine what had become of Diana! who was perfectly capable of having departed for the Orient without notice. The South Seas must be so wonderful! Had he read “White Shadows”? Wouldn't he just love surf-riding?

Lloyd strained his ears for something from Mrs. Kayne or her husband which might explain Diana's defection—could she be ill? But Sheila, having finished off her Aunt Edna, had now got onto the movies and was demanding his attention. Most of the boys in the upper school forms, she said, went every afternoon in New York, and one Princeton man had told her that his entire class went every evening—it rested their minds. Wasn't Uncle James terrible? But Rachel was a dear, not the least bit like her parents—and awfully full of pep. So was Frances Brice-Brewster.

She hoped he didn't think all their dinners were like this! He must come to a real party soon and go to the theatre and the Crystal Room afterward. He'd

been perfectly wonderful the night of her dance. It had been a success, hadn't it! Didn't he love the Six Little Saxophones? They said one of them was the second son of an English viscount! How did he like "The Four Horsemen"? And had he seen "The Music Box Revue"? Wasn't it simply great? She had been eight times. They were getting fourteen dollars for the best seats—wasn't it awful? He must let her give him another lesson in the fox-trot.

The roast was going around followed by Jarmon with the champagne—his employer having had the foresight to stock up heavily just before the act went into effect.

"Cliquot '98?" he breathed hotly into Lloyd's ear like a small sirocco.

Mrs. Rufus, with the aid of the rector and Mr. Pepperill, had turned the table, and Mrs. Brice-Brewster now swung a pillow-like bosom of finest texture incrustated with diamonds in the direction of Lloyd. She had been telling Mr. Kayne, she said, that her solution of the labor problem—socialism and all that sort of thing—was to make the lower classes feel that the upper classes took a genuine interest in their welfare. Of course while the war was on one had been overwhelmed with other work, but now that it was over everybody ought to do their part. That was the only way to "stem the rising tide of discontent"—by personal service. She was trying to impress that upon her own Frances, Sheila Kayne, and all their young friends—that they ought to give part of a day every week—in spite of their social engagements—to some sort of personal service, such as teaching classes of working girls or helping mothers to take care of their children. That was what she was doing herself—three mornings a week—trying, as she put it, to do her own small part.

He murmured a polite acquiescence, wondering what

instruction to working girls Sheila could give in any subject—lessons in the “toddle,” perhaps—or how much assistance she could be in taking care of children when she herself was so obviously in need of supervision.

“Thank goodness we’re through with radicalism for the moment at any rate,” the rector was remarking over his champagne glass. “These socialists overlook the paradox that if, as they say, wealth is social disorder, to distribute it is merely to scatter the disease!”

“Hear! Hear! That’s really clever—I call it!” exclaimed Doctor Follansbee in delighted accents. “The number of cases would be increased—that is all!—epidemic instead of endemic!”

“I have no patience,” continued Mr. Thrum severely, “with the claim that any approval of socialism can be deduced from the New Testament. ‘Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s and unto God the things that are God’s.’”

“Divide up all the wealth and in twenty years it would be back again in substantially the same hands!” said Senator Krass impressively. “The right to possess and retain the fruits of a man’s industry—and, I may say, to pass it on to his children—is ingrained in human nature. Do away with it and ambition would cease and the nation sink into sloth. Look at Russia!”

For a moment or two everybody appeared to be taking a look at Russia, and then Mrs. Rufus terminated the temporary silence induced by the polite desire to give proper weight to the Senator’s words, by saying with a slight flutter at her own temerity:

“Well, I’m glad those Bolsheviks have got what they deserved at last!”

“Yes, indeed!” echoed Mrs. James, her philanthropic mind instantly obsessed with a sudden vision of new millions to be fed. “I hear their condition is terrible.”

Sheila tweaked Maitland's sleeve.

"Aunt Edna always makes me think of a robin red-breast carrying a worm to somebody. She has such a wonderful time doing it!" she whispered.

Maitland wondered what direction Mrs. James's energies would take if famine there should no longer be.

James, who had hitherto been apparently engrossed in contemplating his own image as reflected from his gold plate, looked up suddenly and announced that from his observation the unions had got enough of it. He was evidently referring to a part of the conversation between the rector and Mr. Pepperill which had lingered in his recollection but had escaped that of the rest. Its inconsequence passed unnoticed, however, and Mrs. Rufus felt gratified that James was really making an effort.

"I hear," announced Mr. Mallory brightly to Mrs. Krass, and loud enough for general conversation, "that the new hotel at Red Sulphur is quite good. Brock's got it, you know. Great friend of mine. Bright fellow. Must try it."

Mrs. Krass, who had been under the impression that the best people did not use hotels, but somehow managed to carry their establishments with them, like snails, wherever they went, became vaguely uneasy, but said that she liked hotels because the coffee was always so good. You couldn't seem to get your own coffee to be like that. From hotels the talk drifted toward the drama, the various members of the party firing off their views in short, emphatic salvos.

"That first act—! Simply immense! But then it petered out somehow, didn't you think?—Oh, I didn't like it at all! Sentimental nonsense— But I love sentiment! I had tears in my eyes most of the time!

Barrie, you know— Quite fanciful but perfectly sweet!”

Then Mrs. Brice-Brewster, evidently not wishing young Professor Carraway to think her light-minded, asked everybody if they had been to the new Egyptian wing of the Museum and seen those extraordinary little models that had been unearthed recently and were on special exhibition—little models of boats and fishes and pieces of meat and other things that they put right in the tomb with a dead king so that he could use them in the next world—perfectly charming!

Maitland wondered what on earth it was all about. These people presumably were not fools. Yet they were talking baby talk. The burden of their remarks had been entirely about things—things to eat, things to wear, things to live in, things to play with, restaurants, resorts, dressmakers, hotels, golf-links, theatres, travel, yachts, and cards. It was the talk of the rich—oozing with money in spite of war, pestilence, and famine, of death, income, and excess-profit taxes, of the high cost of living, the collapse of foreign markets, and the plunge downward of securities.

There they all were—eminently representative of their respective branches of the social organism, of its business, law, politics, its ostentatious and patronizing charity, its vapid life of flitting pleasure and its capable commercial clergy. They were incredible! Complacent survivals of the Victorian era who had hardly been aware that a world war was going on and had now forgotten that there had ever been one. Or mummies, rather! Curiosities—perpetuated like flies embedded in the yellow amber of their golden age. They had settled down over a quarter of a century ago assured of their own permanence and had gathered their wealth

about them, adding to it, year by year, decade by decade, until they were entombed in it.

Their sole idea of progress was a continued increase in prosperity! There was still a church but it was empty of religion. Mr. Thrum would have been successful in any other kind of business. The socialism he was so anxious about was, after all, just quarrelling about money! Property, possessions, respectability, hypocrisy!

Materialism! It fairly shouted at you from the ponderous walnut stairway of the wainscoted entrance-hall, from the onyx and marble-topped tables of the gilt drawing-room crowded with photographs in ornate gold and silver frames, and from the braid upon the claret liveries of the footmen!

He recalled, looking across the table at Mr. Pepperill, what the latter had said on their walk down Fifth Avenue the afternoon when he had first learned of the Kaynes' existence. The old gentleman had been quite right! There had never been such a century of material progress in history, but the sense of beauty had been lost in the whir of machinery. The blue arc of heaven glinted with wings—not those of angels—but of gas-driven airplanes; the whisper that leapt across the ether was not the voice of God. We had become self-sufficient supermen. We could get along by ourselves. This whole generation—with its ingenuity, its efficiency, its worship of wealth and success—had been the same all over the world.

He wondered if what was true of civilization as a whole, was not equally true of nations, of families, of individuals? Just as the Roman Empire had succumbed to materialism, so in its turn had the German Empire. Whether or not one believed that God had traced the second commandment with his own finger upon

the tablet of stone given to Moses upon Mt. Sinai, there was no law more fixed in nature than that the sins of the fathers were visited upon the children—collectively and individually. The sins of their fathers were being visited even now upon the children of Russia, of Austria, of Germany—upon the Romanoffs, the Hapsburgs, the Hohenzollerns—and would be for generations yet to come.

And wasn't it the same with the Kaynes and the whole materialistic bunch they played with? Weren't the children paying the penalty of their father's and grandfather's materialism? Was not retribution descending upon the neurotic, excited child at his side, whose chatter had never once ceased; upon her sister sacrificed for a title; upon that other who should have occupied the vacant chair opposite? He played with the idea. Even so, had the Victorian era, the end of the nineteenth century, or the period just before the war been a whit more materialistic than the present transitional epoch? Had the world learned anything? Where would it all end?

The crystal finger-bowls on their squares of damask had been passed and pyramids of nectarines and South African peaches waved before each guest. Jarmon was moving from place to place tenderly carrying a bottle, as a high priest might hold a sacred vessel.

"Madeira, sir?"

"Aha! The Russell Madeira!" chirped Mr. Mallory, his eye glistening. "It had its voyage around the world in '48. I advise you ladies to take some while you can get it."

Thus encouraged, the majority of the ladies allowed their glasses to be filled, and after tasting the wine cautiously, gave vent to various commendatory murmurs.

"I think it's perfectly nasty!" confessed Sheila, puckering her lips.

Capper pushed open the heavy doors and the ladies arose. Mrs. Kayne turned archly and said to her husband:

"Don't stay out too long, Rufus. You mustn't deprive us poor women of the charms of your masculine conversation."

Diana had not appeared.

CHAPTER XIII

"THE SPIRIT OF 1921"

It was but eleven o'clock when Lloyd inserted his latch-key in his front door, for the dinner, as the dinners of true Victorians always do, had broken up precisely at half past ten. On the table in the hall lay a note in a gray envelope bearing his name, the flap still damp from sealing.

"Dear Lloyd," it read: "I am giving a small party this evening for Miss Kayne. I could not get you on the telephone either at your office or your house. If you get back before eleven-thirty won't you join us at the Revels? Or, if you can't make that, ask for me at the Croyon. Don't fail us!—Larry."

Diana's absence was accounted for! It was decent of Devereaux to want to include him. He was lucky enough to intercept a taxi at the Players', and reached Forty-second Street while the performance was still on. "Show's about over," warned the man in the box-office, but Lloyd paid for his entrance and went in.

A "Vision of the Ages" was being presented, each era personified by some beauty in an extravagant costume of the period, who descended mincingly a long flight of steps toward the audience amid an ear-splitting racket from the tiny wooden mallets furnished to the spectators. Either Madame de Staël or the Du Barry was just being acclaimed, as Lloyd, working his way along the outer fringe of tables, began his search for Diana's party.

At first he thought that the plan must have been changed, for he could see nothing of her, but having made the rear circuit he suddenly observed her directly opposite him at the table nearest the stage. Returning, he wove through the maze of chairs amid audible curses from the occupants.

"Good boy!" whispered Devereaux, squeezing his hand as Lloyd slipped into the vacant place, while Diana's face registered pseudo-horror and humiliation.

"Was anything left of me?" she asked of him across the débris-strewn table-top. "Honestly, I forgot all about having to dine at home."

"The Reverend Thumb—or whatever his name is—seemed quite distressed at not finding you there," he retorted. "That was all."

She turned her head toward the stage, and Lloyd glanced round the group. Two tables had been pushed together to make room for eleven persons besides himself. At the first were Diana, another girl whom he did not recognize, Darcy, Longwood, and Devereaux; while at the next, forming another or perhaps a part of the same group, were two women and four men none of whom he had ever seen.

The elder of the women, who wore a double string of large pearls and a striking cerise and silver-gray gown open in the back to the waist, must have been over fifty years of age, for her hair was white in spite of her girlish complexion. Her features, though diminutive, were clear-cut, her small teeth regular, her head with its cluster of white curls exquisite.

The other woman, perhaps twenty years younger and in her own way equally striking, was a slender brunette with brilliantly glowing cheeks. Of the men, two were very young—almost boys, and nondescript; the third

was pursy and lackadaisical, with a light-brown pointed beard designed to conceal the inadequacy of his chin, and the flowing black tie and velvet collar characteristic of stage artists. His nose was too small, as was his mouth, which had rosebud lips. But it was the remaining member of the party who interested Maitland most.

This was a man of uncertain age, pallid skin, a flat triangular nose, and lizard-like eyes which seemed never to drop their lids. The short upper lip was slightly lifted, revealing pointed and widely set teeth, the chin round, the cheek-bones high, the chestnut hair long, thick, and wavy. To Lloyd, who had been thrown constantly during his military service with men of all races, this one appeared an ethnological miscellany—a Eurasian possibly. He had on a short dinner-jacket which fitted him admirably—and wore in his soft pleated silk shirt pearl studs of enormous size. His arms appeared to be too short for his body and from them dangled short thick hands. His expression was arrogant, his general effect subtly unwholesome. His gaze at that moment was concentrated upon the back of Diana's neck and she seemed conscious of it, for she half turned her shoulder.

The Du Barry and her attendants surrendered the spot-light to a succession of young ladies, each allegorical of an epoch adapted to the display of the human figure. At the end "The Spirit of 1921," a lovely girl, nude save for a leopard-skin, leaped forward, fireflies flickering in her hair. The orchestra struck up a frenzied bacchanale. Faster and faster the girl whirled amid the fusillade of the hammers, dropping at last breathless on her knees not far from Diana, the spot-light enhaloing them both while the audience renewed its volume of applause.

"Well done, Mercedes!" cried Diana, clapping her hands. "You're coming to-night, aren't you?" she added.

"Of course I am!" panted the girl. "Where are we going?"

"To my studio."

"I'll be there in twenty minutes!" answered Mercedes, rising gracefully to her bare feet and loping to the wings.

The lights sprang up and the hubbub incident to a dispersing throng filled the hall. Devereaux presented Lloyd first to the girl beside Diana—Longwood's sister—and then to the other two women, Mrs. Wingate—the name was familiar to Maitland as having figured in the divorce court—and Miss Ricardo. The men were not introduced.

"I told Mercedes we'd go to my studio," remarked Diana, as she lit a cigarette, "but if Larry wants to take us right over to the Croyon, I can leave a note for her."

"I didn't know you were artistic!" said Lloyd.

"I'm not," replied Diana. "I merely have a studio. Everybody does nowadays!"

"Oh, I should like to see your studio!" exclaimed Mrs. Wingate. She nodded toward the bearded man. "Mr. Florian says it is charming!"

"Mr. Florian should be at the Court of St. James!" laughed the girl.

"I prefer to serve in the Temple of Diana," he countered half insolently, as they strolled toward the door.

Only part of the party could be accommodated in the elevator, and Larry, Darcy, and Lloyd, with the two Longwoods, waited for the next trip.

"Awfully glad you could come, old man," said Devereaux. "We happened to be next to Mrs. Wingate and her crowd, so I had to ask them to join us."

"Who's the queer-looking man with her?" asked Lloyd of the group generally.

"Oh, don't you know Doctor Dhal?" exclaimed Miss Longwood, an amiable, horsy-looking young woman. "He's her *guru*! She has him around everywhere. She's studying Yogi. So many people are, you know. She says she never felt so well in her life. She can stand on her head beautifully."

"Dhal's all the rage," explained Devereaux. "Nobody knows exactly who he is, but he has got an extraordinary hold on all sorts of people—of both sexes. He has two institutions or sanitariums here, one up-town for women, and one in Wall Street for the tired business man. You can get your soul into complete equilibrium for a hundred dollars. Or if you have a sufficiently white soul and large enough purse, you may be initiated into the inner mysteries of his order."

"But why does she take him around with her?" innocently asked Lloyd.

"Oh, that's part of it," explained Darcy. "She's his *chela* and can do nothing without his approval. She's way up in it—thirty-third degree or whatever it is. Spends most of her time down at his place on Long Island—a sort of health club—where the members do all the work, cook, scrub the floors, clean the windows—very nice for Doctor Dhal!"

"I'd like to see Lulie Wingate down on her knees scrubbing floors!" exclaimed Miss Longwood. "That would be enough to cure me of almost anything!"

"And those two boys?" inquired Lloyd. "They seem very young."

Miss Longwood smiled sardonically.

"Why, they're her '*gigolos*.' Every elderly rich woman has a '*gigolo*' nowadays, and Lulie has two—besides her *guru*—a complete establishment."

The elevator had returned by this time and it now engulfed them. Lloyd was crowded into a motor with the Longwoods and the two "*gigolos*," and they whirled off across town, drawing up behind the other machines in front of a low brick house with solid green shutters. He had a vague impression of being near the river. Near by a tall chimney poured forth a pillar of velvet smoke.

Diana received them at the door and waved them into a large room on the ground floor containing an immense low divan, a half-dozen Italian chairs, a large tapestry, and a teak-wood table covered with innumerable tin boxes of cigarettes. The studio was already thick with smoke, and Mr. Florian, at the request of Miss Ricardo, was playing on the piano some incidental music composed by himself for a play for which he was painting the scenery. Doctor Dhal was sitting beside Mrs. Wingate on the divan. None of them seemed to know exactly why they were there.

"Lulie," cried Miss Longwood, "do get Doctor Dhal to show us some of his wonderful tricks."

Mrs. Wingate looked apprehensively at her companion. Everybody was clamoring for a wonderful trick. Doctor Dhal smiled indolently.

"They are only for children," he remarked in a musing voice. "They can be bought for a few dollars."

His audience, however, vociferously insisting that they were all children, demanded a trick. Dhal bent over and said something in a low tone to his *chela*.

"My *guru* asks you to draw up in a close circle and link elbows," said Mrs. Wingate. "You can tie his hands and feet with handkerchiefs and three of you must hold him tightly. Then, on the putting out of the lights, perhaps he will disappear!"

"Let's get in on this!" whispered Longwood to Maitland and Devereaux, producing a heavy silk handkerchief. Doctor Dhal, his cigarette hanging from his lips, slowly arose and held out his short fat arms. The rest made a circle about the four men. Longwood tied the *guru's* ankles as tight as he could draw the handkerchief, fastening it with a double bowline. Lloyd and Devereaux bound his wrists, pulling the knots until the flesh bulged on either side.

"Hurt?" demanded Lloyd, noting the clamminess of the skin.

"It is nothing," answered Doctor Dhal. "Now let each of you take one of my arms. And be sure not to let me get away! Stand close."

"Got him?" asked Longwood.

"Put out the light," said Doctor Dhal.

Diana pulled the chain of the concealed ceiling light. For a moment no sound could be heard in the darkness save the excited breathing of those in the circle around the four men. Then Lloyd heard a sharp suspiration followed by a groan. The arm which he held twitched convulsively, but he did not relax his grip. Something uttered a strange cattish cry, beside and below him. He felt a hot breath on his neck and two hands grasped him by the throat. Furious, he clutched at his assailant's head. Yogi or no Yogi, this was no joke!

"Light!" he choked, and Diana flashed it on.

He found himself struggling fiercely with Longwood. On the floor beside their feet lay a scattered pile of handkerchiefs. The *guru* had vanished. They all gasped with astonishment, peering stupidly at the place where they had last seen him.

"Here is where you should look!" said Doctor Dhal sweetly, as he sauntered forward unruffled from the other

end of the room, his cigarette still hanging from his lips.

Diana was watching him intently, her brow drawn into a frown.

"It is nothing," he said to her familiarly, his eyes holding hers; then, dropping his voice, he added: "The tantra grows in the hearts of those that know Brahma; to them all mysteries are known, and all things are possible."

"Bravo!" ejaculated Miss Longwood. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Bud!"

Her brother grinned sheepishly.

"That would come in very handy on occasion!" he replied. "You certainly put one over that time, doctor."

A faint sneer curled the *guru's* lips.

"A child's trick!" he said and turned to Miss Ricardo. "Dear lady, show them what a month of Yogi has done for you."

The company were still standing in the circle they had originally formed. Miss Ricardo, obediently placing her hands palm upward one over the other upon the top of her head, bent over until they touched the floor and, without any apparent difficulty, slowly raised her legs in the air, and then, after waving them to the right and left, gradually lowered them to the floor again, amid expressions of wonder from the onlookers.

Lloyd began to think he must be in a madhouse.

"I feel as light as a feather. I have been taking Doctor Dhal's exercises only a month," said Miss Ricardo.

"You do it beautifully, but of course you are very light anyway!" commented Diana. "A heavier person might find it more difficult."

"Any one who knows Yogi has complete control of the body," replied Doctor Dhal. He addressed Mrs.

Wingate: "Beloved lady, will you not also do the exercise?"

Mrs. Wingate without hesitation handed Mr. Florian her pearls and elevated herself upside down in the air, accomplishing the feat with a disclosure of fascinating pink silk tights.

"Who was it," murmured Darcy to Lloyd significantly, "who said 'We should have respect for gray hairs—particularly our own'?"

At that moment Mercedes burst radiantly into the studio, having discarded her leopard-skin for an elaborate evening dress by no means as abbreviated as those of the non-professional ladies present. Diana, putting her arm about the newcomer, led her across the room to Mrs. Wingate and Miss Ricardo.

"How about going along?" suggested Darcy. "I'm an old man and it's getting toward morning. If you're going anywhere to dance, why not begin?"

"There's a room, supper, and three colored artists waiting for us up at the Croyon," announced Larry. "Why not have some exercise in which we can all take part? Dancing is viewed with favor by the Vedas, isn't it, doctor?"

The *guru* bowed gravely.

"Among all tantriks dancing is regarded as both honorable and holy, and every temple has its troop of nautch-girls, to whom are given the greatest reverence and respect."

"Let's go!" cried Diana. "My feet are twitching for that jazz!"

She shooed them all out and extinguished the lights, locking the door behind her and putting the key in the pocket of her wrap.

The taxi-drivers, fraternizing under an electric light,

tossed aside their cigarettes and came running to their respective cars. It was the consensus of their opinion, after comparing their experiences, that people did not go to out-of-the-way places like this in the middle of the night for any good purpose. The lights had been put out—all had seen it. Rough stuff undoubtedly. A queer crowd. Well, if the swells went in for that sort of thing! Why not either get rid of them or give everybody else a chance! From Second Avenue came the gathering roar of an elevated train. It flashed by, dropping a few sparks on the surface tracks below. Nobody had ever heard of a spark like that starting a fire, but then perhaps the proper tinder had not been ready.

Behind the newel post of a flight of brownstone steps a policeman's eye searched the deserted street for lurking shadows. It caught one—that of a fat Chinaman with bent head, and hands folded in his sleeves, padding swiftly toward his scuttle; it overtook another—a bedraggled, limping figure in a tawdry hat. The policeman emerging followed this—alert for a violation of the “Tenement House Law”—and came upon Diana's party. He too wondered what sort of goings-on there had been in there behind those curtains. He knew what kind of folk were up at that hour of the night. That was his business.

They were off again, packed in like sardines, Lloyd having lingered behind in order to be with Diana. He got in last and took one of the collapsible seats, riding backward opposite her. Since that day in the blind he had not been able to keep his thoughts from her, although he did not regard himself as in love. She was beautiful, she interested him, she piqued his curiosity, she filled him with a strange exhilaration—but he knew, or thought he knew, other things about her that ren-

dered real love out of the question. One did not fall in love with such a woman.

He did not realize that Diana was one of those women born to love and to be loved, who by a singular allure-ment stimulate the instincts and enthrall the imagination. She had possessed this curious charm even as a child and had used it more or less consciously upon the men with whom she had been thrown. Artists had wished to paint her. Older men had found pleasure in talking to her. Little boys had quarrelled over her, they knew not why. For there escaped from her a palpable radiance, a strange warmth and perfume, and her lips, delicately mobile and sensuous, drew the eye and held it, saying as they did so much more than the words they uttered.

The Croyon was still ablaze when they rolled up to its side entrance. Through the revolving door drifted the subdued strains of music—a coming-out dance the door-keeper informed them. They had just got out when another taxi drew up to the curb. An embarrassed youth, his coat-collar turned up and his tall hat pushed upon the back of his head, emerged and stood holding the door of the vehicle open. Maitland was curious to see who else was in the cab. Then a slim leg appeared below the aperture of the door and a young girl, her coat hanging from one shoulder, half stumbled, half fell into the boy's arms.

It was Sheila. Before Maitland could recover from the shock of this discovery her comrade had lifted her to her feet and pulled her cloak into position as if she were an automaton. But obviously there was something the matter with the automaton's machinery, for she could hardly walk and her eyes were fixed upon some indeterminate point in space. To protect the girl from

the observation of his associates, Lloyd hastily interposed himself between her and them.

"Are you all right?" he heard the boy ask uncertainly.

Sheila did not reply, but slowly walked toward the door, feeling her way, as it seemed. Lloyd kept beside her.

"Miss Kayne!" he said.

She turned a chalky fatuous face to him.

"Oh 's you!" she mumbled. "I'm all 'ight! Had terrible funny time. So many trees! But they're absolutely nothing to me! Absolutely nothing! Absolutely—nothing!"

She swayed and he grasped her arm.

"Come along!" he said. "The party's over. I'll take you home."

"I'm so sleepy!" she sighed. "An' I don't want to see any more trees!"

The boy, acknowledging instinctively Maitland's authority, attempted to give an account of himself.

"We—we only went once around the Park," he stammered. "We were at the dance and a whole lot of us got taxis and took a ride."

Sheila's head fell forward.

"I'm so-o sleepy!" she whimpered.

"Who are you?" demanded Lloyd of the boy.

"My name's Jones—Mansfield Jones!" he answered.

"She was all right when she got in. But I saw her take something out of her bag. It was in a pink box. All of a sudden she began to talk—and talk——"

"Tell her sister to come here," he ordered. "That tall girl in the blue wrap."

The boy darted off relieved at being directed what to do.

A moment later they were rolling up Fifth Avenue,

Sheila's inert form between them, her head lolling on Diana's shoulder. From her half-open lips came a sickly sweet odor.

"Here's the key," said Diana in a hard voice, and Lloyd hurried up the brownstone steps and unlocked and pushed open the heavy door. An electric light burned in the hall inside. It was but a few hours since he had last seen Sheila there. Her doom had been visited upon her far more swiftly than he had fancied probable! Poor kid!

He returned to the cab and together they guided the dazed child up the steps. On the inner threshold Diana turned to him.

"Thank Heaven, none of them saw!" she said, looking twenty years older than he had ever seen her.

It was two o'clock when Lloyd re-entered the house on Irving Place and climbed wearily up to his room. Two miles away Diana with haggard face was bending over the little huddled heap in Sheila's bed. The room was in an incredible state of disorder, clothes lying about everywhere upon the floor, drawers half open. The child was sleeping profoundly.

Diana opened her vanity bag. There was the usual "Dorine," lip-stick, puff, mirror, a ten-dollar bill, two one-dollar bills, three silver half-dollars—for tips—a tiny pad and pencil, a latch-key, and a pink-enamelled silver box containing four white tablets.

Her eye swept the bureau, searched the top drawer, flashed to the mantel, where lay three garishly bound books dealing with the practices of Yogi and various forms of Hindoo philosophy and religion, the titles of which she did not pause to take in.

She went into the adjoining bathroom and turned on the light. The silver-plated mirror of the medicine-

closet above the wash-basin was ajar, and on its lower shelf was crowded a row of bottles of all sizes—a medical zoo. Diana was unfamiliar with drugs but she recognized a blue bottle of crystals of bromide, a can of ether, a large vial of aromatic spirits of ammonia, a bottle of "Kaufman's Anodyne," and a small jar without a label containing tablets similar to those in the bag. These last she confiscated, together with those in the enamelled box.

As she returned this empty to the bag a card fluttered to the floor. She picked it up. It was one of her mother's dinner-cards, bearing the heavy gold crest that had been adopted by the Kaynes. On it were the words: "Mr. Maitland."

Diana, with a last look at her sister's motionless form, turned off the light and closed the door of Sheila's room, feeling as she stood outside upon the landing as if she had just left a chamber of death. She had received the severest shock of her life. Unnerved, her muscles trembling, she paced her unlighted room, incapable of undressing, sleep out of the question. The spectacle of Sheila under the influence of a drug, mumbling like an insane person, without self-control, at the mercy of the first stranger who might have passed, filled her with a horror that excluded any possibility of her ordinary interrogation as to why a thing should not be done if the doer were willing to take the consequences.

This was her own sister—flesh of her flesh—yet what had she ever done for her to help her to run straight? She had looked contemptuously upon her father and mother, but was she any better? Not a bit! She had scoffed at their dulness, their snobbishness, their egotism, their materialism—although she had not called it that—but she herself was just as stupid, as sordid,

even more selfish than they were. What sort of sister had she been?

It was not what she had done so much as what she had not done that had contributed to this catastrophe. Surely *she*, far better than her father and mother, knew the sort of temptations girls were subjected to in these days. But she had never uttered a word of warning or advice to Sheila, had not stretched forth a finger to keep her from plunging over the cliff—had been ready to let her go. Her negligence was criminal.

She perceived that she was not indifferent to Sheila, as she had thought, but that she loved her and that her love was something real. It was because of that love that she now stood there pressing her fists to her temples in an agony of self-reproach. Had she acknowledged that love before, this awful thing would not have happened to her sister and she herself would not be suffering the recriminations of that conscience whose sanction she had denied. What difference did it make about the origin of that silent voice? She could not escape it. The fact of its existence transcended any theory or doubt concerning it. And if love were a real thing like that, perhaps, as well, were those other things which she had derided, that love demanded—self-sacrifice and the rest.

All her life she had insisted on being shown; and in what she could not see she had refused to believe. Let metaphysicians speculate and saints see visions; she would accept only what she could know through her senses! She was an independent human being—brought into the world without her will—acknowledging no responsibilities—a law unto herself!

This hypothesis now fell with a crash about her. Independent? Irresponsible? As what? The vagabond

winds? The quenchless planets? The meteor's trailing fire? The drifting clouds? The flickering northern lights? The thunder and the rain?—Nothing in the universe was independent of anything else. Everything was subject to immutable laws that controlled each vagrant breath of wind, each prismatic drop falling from cataract, wave-crest or shower, each wandering planet and plunging star, each vibration of the thunder, each dancing flicker from the electric north! And each was bound unto each and to all else in nature, each in some mysterious way was necessary to the whole, and each obedient to the eternal laws under which it came into being.

She knew it, but how did she know it? How could she recognize these laws? She could touch the waves and satisfy herself of their existence, but she could not touch the tide; she could smell the grass but she could not smell the spring; she could see the moon but not the force that held it in the sky! All were inferential.

She did not question the orbit of the earth around the sun, the precession of the equinoxes, the coming of the harvest, the pull of the magnetic pole that infallibly dragged the compass needle to the north, the electric power that turned the dynamo. She could not see any of them, but she acknowledged them all readily enough. Was love any less real than magnetism? Certainly it exerted as great an influence. That we could not explain the origin of what we called electricity did not lead us to question its existence or its power. We called magnetism a physical fact. Why was it any more of a physical fact than love? Was there any difference between the physical and the spiritual? If so, what was it? Was not a cruel word as deadly as a

knife thrust? Were not loyalty and sympathy, the love of liberty and truth, just as real in every way as anything else in nature, and was not love a law of nature?

She had disobeyed those laws in her neglect of Sheila, and both her sister and herself were suffering the inevitable consequences. That her father and mother had likewise neglected those laws neither affected her own responsibility nor the results of her having disregarded it. Both—all of them—were guilty. Who was she that she should defy the laws of the universe—of life—whether they were called physical or spiritual?

She groped her way to the window and looked out eastward across the chimney-pots. Low over the horizon defying the coming dawn blazed the morning star. For a moment she thought it must be a huge electric light on the apex of some distant tower. Then she realized that this could not be so.

This glittering orb was no human fabrication. Whatever mysterious force had created the universe had hung it there. It threw a soft effulgence—a path of star-dust—through the window to her feet. And it seemed almost like a lighted lamp set in the window of the sky and illuminating the darkness of her mind.

Just as half a century before the old pirate, her grandfather, had got religion on the back platform of the "Zarazota" side-tracked in the Denver yards, and had thrown himself on his knees beside his brass bed and called upon God to keep his soul and, should he die, to take it to himself—so Diana, cynic as hitherto she had been—self-sufficient, contumacious, defiant—now experienced a change of heart somewhat akin to the conversion of old Peter.

She did not fall upon her knees and stretch out her

arms to the Almighty. She did not call upon Christ as the pirate had done fifty years before. She stood silent, with her hands clasped upon her breast, gazing at the star.

CHAPTER XIV

RUFUS "GOES BAD"

DIANA watched the star slowly set behind the chimney-pots of the city. It was as if the lamp to which she had likened it in her imagination had been gradually extinguished. A curtain seemed to have been drawn down across the heavens. Darkness descended upon her spirit.

She threw herself upon her bed trying to snatch a few moments of sleep and, when at last she succeeded in losing consciousness, she saw Sheila, her eyes bandaged with a handkerchief, dancing straight toward the edge of a precipice at the foot of which she knew lay Claudia. She herself was somewhere about and she could hear herself saying: "Let her go! What difference does it make?" Then in some mysterious way Sheila disappeared and there was left only the handkerchief, which floated down—down—toward trees—infinite in number—grotesque—horrible—yet "terribly funny"—that "meant absolutely nothing—"ab-solutely nothing!" while Doctor Dhal stood on his head near by and chanted glutinously: "Let her go! Let her go! Let her go!"

She awoke and found herself sitting up in bed shivering. In the east a pale efflorescence made a background for the sky-line. She recalled the last time she had seen the dawn. It had been down at Treasure Island in November in the blind at "The Tarn" with Lloyd. The thought of him now gave her courage; just as the sight of the star had given her hope. He had been right.

How decent of him not to have thrown her own words back in her teeth. "Silly kids!" Never again would that expression pass her lips. If only she had paid some attention to Claudia! Given her a word or two of sisterly advice!

Even as she sat there staring out of the window the east grew brighter. Yes, the dawn was coming—a new day—an entirely new day! She ceased shivering and lay back upon her pillow. Peace took possession of her. When she came to herself the room was bright with sunlight.

She arose, rang for her maid, bathed, dressed, and drank a cup of coffee. Then she went downstairs to Sheila's room. The child was lying upon her back, half awake.

"Hello, Di!" she murmured drowsily. "You're up early."

Diana kissed her and sat down upon the bed—something she had not done for years. Sheila gazed at her surprised.

It was clear that she remembered nothing of the occurrences of the night before. Her recollection stopped with her leaving the dance to go for her taxi ride with the others. The drug had obliterated everything else. Against the white pillow her face looked yellow—like that of a little old woman.

"Tell me," said Diana, "where did you get the drug you took last night?"

A look of terror came into the child's face.

"I—I didn't take any drug!" she answered in a thick voice. "How can you say such a thing! It's horrid of you!"

Diana laid her cool hand on her sister's forehead.

"Where did you get it?" she repeated gently. "How

long have you been taking it? Tell me the truth. I'm going to stand back of you and we'll fight this thing out together!"

She put her arms around the girl and laid her own head upon the pillow beside her. Sheila, starved for want of family affection, was melted. Sobbing, she pressed her face to her sister's.

"Oh, Di!" she moaned, clinging wildly to her, "oh, Di! If only I'd had you before!"

"Never mind!" answered Diana, "you've got me now, and you'll always have me—as long as I live. I swear it!"

Gradually Diana learned the story. She couldn't stand the pace going out night after night, Sheila said, and first had tried to stimulate herself with tea and coffee, but this had given her headache and made her sleepless. Some girls could come home from a dance and sleep right through until noon the next day. But she couldn't. As soon as it got light she woke up and couldn't go to sleep again at all. She was naturally sleepless and this was intensified by excitement, she supposed. So she had resorted, at the suggestion of a friend, to bromide. This had accomplished the purpose for a week or two but soon ceased to have any effect. A drug clerk had recommended "Kaufman's Anodyne," and she had tried that. But it was not enough. Almost ready to jump out of her skin with lack of sleep, bodily fatigue, and nerves, she had experimented unsuccessfully with ether. That had brought her to cocaine. She had only taken it once—the night before.

"But where did you get the stuff?" demanded Diana. Sheila turned away her head.

"Don't make me tell you!" she begged. "It isn't fair! Please, don't!"

"But you must tell me!" insisted Diana. "It isn't fair to the others if you don't!"

"Well, then, if I've got to tell," answered her sister, "Cecily Marden's mother hired a woman to take Cecily out at night and wait for her—a sort of 'accommodating maid,' you know—and she carries it round and sells it at dances. The girls buy it from her. She charges ten dollars for a dozen pills or she'll sell you a whole bottle for fifty. I got it from her—last evening in the dressing-room at the Croyon. You say you want 'bicarbonate of soda.'"

Diana shuddered. What an escape—if it was an escape!

"But you won't tell anybody—father or mother—*will* you!" begged Sheila. "If you won't, I'll do anything you say—promise you anything!"

"What you need is to get yourself into decent physical condition," declared Diana as she rose to go, after making Sheila agree to take no medicine of any sort without a doctor's prescription. "You're in frightful shape! You ought to give up lunches, matinées, and movies, and take some open-air exercise. Why don't you skate? Or, anyhow go to a gym a couple of times a week. Limit your number of dances. They're all alike and most of them probably bore you to death. And cut out cocktails and cigarettes. I know you'll laugh at me for that! But I do, whenever I feel the least bit seedy or am going on a shooting trip. The first thing is to get thoroughly rested. I want you to stay in bed until after lunch to-day—sleep or no sleep, understand? And then go and take grandfather for a run in the motor. No fox-trotting to-night. Bed at nine. And old Doctor Di will call in again to-morrow morning. You'll be all right!"

"Oh, Diana!" cried Sheila, giving her a hug. "You *are* a wonder! I'll do exactly as you say. Tell grandfather I'll be up there to get him at three o'clock and that we'll go out to the Bronx to see the new birds. Um-m!" she stretched. "I feel as if I were going to have a real holiday!"

Rufus Kayne breakfasted downstairs that morning,—as he usually did when he had not been up too late,—and when at about ten o'clock he descended his brownstone steps no one, not even Jarmon, would have suspected that he was anything but a contented man.

It is true that the night before the butler had clocked off five glasses of champagne, one of sherry and two of Madeira, in addition to the double cocktail he had privately served upstairs in the dressing-room before dinner, but his master, in spite of a slight fustiness remotely prophetic of a headache to come, nevertheless appeared to him unusually fit. Accordingly Jarmon had taken the opportunity to inform him that he had been obliged to give the young footman notice for getting intoxicated. The miscreant was, at that moment, lying upstairs in his room in a drunken stupor and he was only waiting for him to come to himself to pack him off.

"Quite right, Jarmon," commended Rufus. "We can't have that sort of thing here. Get another man as soon as you can."

Thus domestic justice took its course, for owing to having been gassed, the footman had been unable to withstand the effect of the glass of champagne remaining in the last bottle at the end of the dinner.

It was one of those ineffably blue mornings that come to American seaboard cities, and a film of light snow lingered here and there upon the pavement of Fifth

Avenue. Ten years ago, reflected Rufus, some idiot would have been jingling up to the Park in a cutter toward McGowan's Pass Tavern and the "magnum" awarded annually to the first adventurer to reach it on runners.

Champagne! It always gave him a headache. Why did he drink the stuff? Only because it was forbidden. Since prohibition had come in he had felt it a moral obligation to let slip no opportunity to take a drink—and then another. Yet he had always been a moderate drinker, just as he had, from a strong preservative instinct, always been moderate in everything.

Like Clive, he was often tempted to wonder at that moderation in view of the unlimited opportunity for profligacy afforded him by his wealth. For Rufus Kayne was a rich man, and apart from his salary of fifty thousand a year as president of the Utopia Trust Company, his income ran well over another hundred. But always his natural caution had led him to postpone the indulgence of his occasional furtive impulses to let himself go, in spite of what he saw other men of his type doing and what he knew they did unseen. Later on, likely enough—in that confidently expected but always slowly receding period of relaxation in time to come,—in Paris or in some foreign city, perhaps, when he would be unobserved,—even sooner, doubtless, if anything should happen to Elizabeth. But in the meantime in his prominent position in Wall Street and society it would be unseemly and dangerous.

Recently, however, it had often come to him that, after all, maybe he was a fool not to seize his chance before it should be too late. Fifteen years of vitality at the most was all that was left to him; and here he was living just as contently as when he had married the pink-

skinned Elizabeth. More so! Imagine a fellow with a hundred and fifty thousand a year living like a Trappist monk! Poverty—labor—chastity. He laughed grimly. What a world! There was the old man once worth his five millions sitting up in the Ramble in Central Park with Uncle Billy and feeding peanuts to the squirrels; and here was he—Rufus Kayne—with all the wealth of an Eastern potentate and an equal opportunity to gratify his natural appetites, working like a dog and living a life of humdrum domesticity with a woman who had allowed herself to run to seed at thirty-five. Terra-cotta! That awful dinner the evening before had finished him. Diana's truancy had been the last straw.

He had been absolutely sincere in his question to Mr. Pepperill: "Do you think anybody cares two cents any longer what anybody does?" He knew no one really did, in spite of the emphasis of the old lawyer's opinion and that of the Reverend Roderick Thrum. Everybody, including Thrum himself, was fully aware that Senator Krass had been married three times and that at least two of his wives were still alive. Yet, because the facts surrounding his various divorces were not presented to the vestry of St. Timothy's in affidavit form, he was permitted to go on giving lecterns and anything else he liked. The whole thing was "bunk."

More than that; this being compelled to live with a woman after you had ceased to love her was cruel to both and a wickedly immoral thing. People had believed in it once—no doubt about that. They had believed in it during the period while he was making his career. But all that was gone. He had nothing to show for his self-restraint. He knew well enough what he would do if he had his chance over again!

He felt that he had been cheated out of a good time.

It was like working all your life to own a house on Madison Square and then finding that everybody had moved on up to Murray Hill. Now everybody was way up above Fifty-ninth Street, and still moving. By the time society reached One Hundred and Tenth, perhaps polygamy would be openly condoned, if it were not then the correct thing. He had been born twenty years too soon. And the irony of it all was that the younger men were doing what they pleased without any comeback.

There was that boy Fannin of the Oriental Trust—divorced by his wife for living with a chorus girl—married again and still cheerfully doing business at the old stand. A coming man! And Wigton of the Aurora—and Newman of the Cottonseed National—both divorced and remarried. He mentally ran over the names of some twenty of the men active in financial affairs with whom he was most frequently thrown—thirteen were divorced, a fair proportion of them with considerable scandal. Yet nobody cared.

Why not get on board the joy-wagon before it was too late? Ten years hence there would be no better chance to enjoy himself than there was now. Everything would be exactly the same in 1931 as in 1921. He'd be coming down the same old steps feeling in just the same old way—if he was there at all!

The air had the brilliant dryness of high places and across the avenue came the mellow boom of the cathedral bells. He wondered what festival or saint's day it was—more bunk! The church business was the worst of all—he could hardly bear any longer to go through with it. A senior warden and an utter agnostic, mumbling prayers and creeds that he did not believe. He wondered what Thrum—way down in his heart—really believed, or if he believed anything. He doubted it.

And he recalled the ancient saw to the effect that all wise men believe the same thing, but no wise man ever tells what it is. A true saying!

As for honesty being the best policy—there was nothing in it and nobody for a single instant supposed that there was. The only commandment one could not afford to ignore was the eleventh. So long as a man stole enough, the world would hail him with enthusiasm and struggle for a seat at his table. Nobody pretended to be honest in the old-fashioned sense any longer. Suppose you told the truth about your underwritings? Or your bonuses and commissions? Or your political contributions or the money that was paid out in legalized blackmail? The irresponsible accounts carried for bosses and public officers? The items concealed in the profit and loss account? Or the facts underlying the euphemisms in your income-tax returns?

He walked on briskly, nodding occasionally to some one he knew, hiding the gnawing dissatisfaction with himself and his life that recently had grown almost desperate. He had realized for a long time that there was nothing in what he had worked so hard to get, that now that he had all the money he wanted there was nothing for him to spend it on, that nothing really mattered, that his so-called social position amounted to no more than that of a wax figure in a tailor's window.

But he had not realized its full futility until the evening before. Was it Mrs. Brice-Brewster or his brother-in-law Ward Mallory, the dour collector of death-masks, Homer Graham, or that little chattering idiot of a Follansbee? Was it any single one of those stuffed parrots or the whole flock of them? Or was it the fact that his own daughter had deliberately—as he sup-

posed—absented herself from his table? Well! Let her go with her smart friends if his weren't good enough for her! Even Sheila had only waited for the coffee to be served before hurrying off with Rachel to a dance somewhere—or was it the Revels or Scandals?

But at that the frivolity of the young was nothing to the frivolity of the old! What was the world coming to, anyway, when even old women like his sister Bridget Mallory bobbed their hair—he thought it was bobbed—exposed their lean arms to the shoulders—wore skirts up to their knees? Bah! A good joke to work all your life for this and then have your children turn up their noses at it!

A flaxen-haired, poorly dressed girl with corn-flower eyes glanced sideways at him and half smiled as she walked past. His blood quickened. After all, he was only fifty-five! Why shouldn't he take what he could get? Why hadn't he had the courage to be independent and express his own individuality? What was public opinion, anyhow? He'd paid to have it manufactured—"accelerated," as the slang was—again and again. They had a regular publicity man on the trust company's pay-roll.

This idea that everybody had his eyes fixed upon you all the time was rot. People were too busy thinking of themselves. So long as you did not cost them money you could do as you liked. The only people who took any interest in you or your conduct were those to whom you were personally known. These people—who might possibly care—were scattered all around—unrelated and disconnected individuals. If you squared them either by persuasion or by purchase, there was nobody left to be afraid of. A strong man could defy them, anyhow. If you were emphatic enough, you could get away with

anything—put them all in the Ananias Club. The world liked a real man who was not afraid of it.

Rufus looked back over his shoulder but the girl had turned down a side street—given him up. His step became a trifle defiant. Already he felt a freer man. When he reached the motor waiting for him in front of the Public Library he paused and lit a second cigar before getting in.

The Utopia Trust Company is a grand affair of marble and polished steel, mahogany and Kurdistan rugs, time-locks, old-young men and trim, discreet girls. One of these last arose from her desk in the glass-partitioned anteroom outside his door as Rufus entered his office, picked up a red-leather note-book and followed him in. It occurred to him that he had never before really appreciated Miss Dolan's figure. What was there about these women who earned their own living—did something? Why wasn't Elizabeth more like that? Elizabeth! But she never had been like that! He noted the girl's alert carriage, the charming simplicity of her plain, dark-blue skirt and white shirt-waist, the way in which her small round head rose on the slender reed of her neck like a flower, the smoothness of her skin, the length of the dark fringes veiling her brown eyes. Yet he realized that it was in none of these things that her lure lay. It was because she was "all there"—alive—on her toes, speaking his language, responsive, ready to deliver the best of herself.

Miss Dolan replied to his greeting without looking at him. His mail was already opened and arranged for his inspection, but he did not examine it. Instead, his gaze continued to linger upon the graceful stenographer. Shape, he concluded, was more important than face. But besides having a form like Hebe's, this young crea-

ture was pretty as a girl on a magazine cover. A pippin! Earning two thousand a year and entirely dependent for her livelihood upon his fancy. His Christian slave! The slave opened the scarlet note-book and appeared to glance at the exposed page—a mere matter of form, as she knew all his engagements by heart.

"You have nothing until eleven-thirty, when you have to meet Mr. Stein and Mr. Savoy at Mr. Pepperill's office," said Miss Dolan in a detached voice. "But there is the regular board meeting at twelve-fifteen. Shall I take any letters now? Or will you go over your mail first?"

She had lowered her head to look at the book in her hand and now she raised her eyes without changing its position. They were large and full of implications. Rufus looked back at her. His income would support seventy-five such young persons in idleness. The fancy amused him. He recalled a song he had heard in a vulgar musical show: "The Turk Had the Right Idea!" Rufus was no simpleton. A man cannot rise to the presidency of a trust company and be one. A girl like this was not the kind to fall for a drink, a dinner, or a diamond ring, but—how about ten thousand dollars a year?

"Er—have I a lunch engagement?" he stammered. She shook her head, meaning "no."

"M-m," she said. It was her only inelegance, and with its suggestion of intimacy it seemed—in her—childish and rather appealing. He wondered what she would do if he told her to write down: "One o'clock. Lunch with Miss Dolan."

For an instant he was tempted to try it; then his common sense intervened. No, better keep his hands off the office. The town was full of women looking for

trouble. Later, if he didn't find anything elsewhere, he could come back. She would be there—right on the pay-roll.

"Never mind," he muttered. "I'll read my mail, I guess."

His eyes lingered on hers for still another instant. As she turned away, Miss Dolan smiled—ever so slightly, but enough.

He felt rejuvenated. He would take his time—look around. Eleven-thirty came before he knew it and he hurried across the street to Pepperill's office to find the others already there and waiting for him—the old lawyer rather impatiently, for he did not approve of the trust company launching out as it was doing even if technically within its charter powers.

The business in hand was a loan from the Utopia to Messrs. Stein and Savoy in their capacity as moving-picture producers, one of their many enterprises in the amusement field. Stein had an extraordinary way of inspiring confidence in people, largely because of his taciturnity. He rarely said anything, letting others do the talking, and was reputed to have made several fortunes. He was big, fish-faced, pop-eyed, imperturbable, and whenever a hippodrome, opera-house, theatre, casino, or moving-picture company went on the rocks he salvaged it, taking most of the stock. There was hardly any large project dedicated to the entertainment and recuperation of the tired business man from New York to San Francisco—or as Savoy, his *alter ego*, preferred to put it, "From Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon"—in which they had not a finger.

Savoy, *né* Lefkowitz, now an individual theatrical producer, had made his first money as a speculator surreptitiously hawking tickets from Long Acre Square

doorways—but aided by a real flair for finance and a first-hand knowledge of what the public wanted, he had pushed his way into the front rank of Broadway potentates in less than fifteen years, changed his name, married the most beautiful chorus girl seen on the Rialto in two generations, made a few millions, helped a Wall Street banker or so to make others, and had in consequence been taken up by society. He and his wife had been fêted and made much of, until by an extraordinary fillip of fortune's penny, they were on familiar terms with a set that Rufus himself would have given much to know.

Savoy was still a comparatively young man—sallow, smooth, insinuating—and Rufus, impressed by his ability and by his friendship with certain persons in high social places, had financed several business deals for him. Stein and he were now about to amalgamate several moving-picture concerns, and against Mr. Pepperill's protest Rufus had orally agreed that the trust company should advance a million dollars to put the new corporation upon its feet, provided the notes should be secured by the individual indorsements of both promoters. The loan was to be secured by a mortgage on the realty of the combining companies, and the issue was to consist of ten notes, each for one hundred thousand dollars, the first payable May 1, 1922, the others at intervals of three months.

The two promoters, Krabfleisch, their lawyer, and Maitland were waiting, but Rufus, being informed at the door that Mr. Pepperill would like to see him before the conference, stepped into the latter's office. The old lawyer, who had just finished going over the papers, looked up at his client over his glasses and remarked querulously:

"See here, Kayne, I don't know that I much fancy a trust company with which I am connected going into the moving-picture business. Somehow, it doesn't seem exactly like banking. You'll be manufacturing baby-carriages next! Can't you call this thing off?"

Kayne shook his head.

"We've got to do something with our money. You know the condition of the railroads and what European trade amounts to—there isn't any. Do you realize we've got over twenty millions surplus? What's the matter with baby-carriages? Couldn't we make them under our charter? You drew it. You ought to know."

He was feeling rather bobbish. Mr. Pepperill observed this fact and scowled.

"Under your charter you could finance an expedition to colonize the North Pole! I saw to that—out of abundant caution. But that's not saying you had better do it. Who knows what's going to happen to this movie business? The bottom might drop out of it any minute."

"It's the third biggest industry in the United States," replied Kayne. "And the Alpha-Omega is a consolidation of several of the strongest companies. The loan is individually guaranteed by both Mr. Stein and Mr. Savoy and secured by a first mortgage on all the property—valued at six millions."

"Six million fiddlesticks!" retorted the lawyer disgustedly. "A mortgage on a lot of hothouses! I'd rather take a chance on something that was actually *ultra vires* than go into any such silly amusement enterprise. It isn't respectable—or, at any rate, not reputable. These fellows go through bankruptcy just as you might drink a cocktail. I don't like the crowd."

The banker shrugged his shoulders. He had heard the same line of argument many times.

"Well," he answered shortly, "I'm responsible. If we can do it under our charter powers, we'll do it. Are the papers all right?"

Mr. Pepperill, without replying, collected his documents, arose and walked stiffly to the door, where again he paused and faced Rufus.

"I want to say once more," he declared huskily, "that whatever its purely legal aspect may be, I don't approve of this loan! It's not good business and if it becomes public it is bound to subject the trust company to unfavorable criticism. I mean this seriously."

Rufus was annoyed. He did not regard the propriety of the loan as any concern of Mr. Pepperill's.

"The loan is going to be made!" he retorted. "But if you feel that way I'll personally guarantee the notes myself. Nobody can criticise that!"

"That is only beating the devil around the stump!" answered the lawyer. "The loan is not a proper loan, in my opinion."

"I'm sorry," replied Rufus drily. "But my opinion, not yours, controls."

"As you please," said Mr. Pepperill, and stalked out before his client.

The group in the conference-room arose upon his entry.

"The papers seem to be correct," he remarked briefly. "Have you got the notes?"

Mr. Krabfleisch handed him a sheaf of oblong papers, and Mr. Pepperill counted them and turned them over to Kayne, who, having added his own name with a fountain pen to the indorsements upon each one, produced a certified check for a million dollars and gave it to Mr.

Stein. The latter gentleman, such transactions being, as it were, matters of ordinary occurrence with him, barely glanced at it and placed it in a thick wallet.

"Well!" he said after he had returned this casually to his inside pocket, "that's all, isn't it?"

Mr. Pepperill went back to his office, while Maitland and Krabfleisch compared copies of the various documents.

"How about some lunch?" suggested Mr. Stein to Kayne. "I can run you up to the Croyon in twenty minutes and we can talk more business maybe." He turned to his associate: "Better join us, Tad!"

There was to Rufus, the business man of stereotyped habits, something exhilarating and slightly surreptitious in abandoning his office and slipping off up-town to a gay restaurant in the middle of the working-day; and this feeling was intensified, not only by the size of Mr. Stein's red-panelled motor with its brocaded wall-covering and nodding artificial flowers, but by the averted faces of the traffic policemen at sight of its mysterious license number. Clearly the fellow had pull.

The pull was again manifest upon their arrival at the Croyon, where Rheinart, in spite of a waiting throng, instantly conducted them to a choicely located table; and by the discovery that his bouillon cup camouflaged a Bronx. He noted several acquaintances at the various tables who he had always assumed never lunched above Fulton Street. The atmosphere was one of studied vivacity and showy smartness, but to Rufus, after his evening with Mrs. Brice-Brewster and her supporting company, it had the dash and sparkle of a careless aristocracy at carnival.

This impression was undisturbed by the obvious fact

that the gathering was not eclectic. Apparently everybody, not only whom he had ever known but had ever heard of, was there. Plainly he was the only one so stupid as to lunch monotonously down-town every day. It was an auspicious beginning to his era of romance!

His eye ran along the tables appraisingly—perhaps the unknown *she* might even now be lunching there. He hardly listened to what Stein and Savoy were saying. At first he had had a vague uneasiness over being seen with them—especially Stein—but this soon changed to complacency. To his surprise they seemed to be on familiar terms with all the smartest people there—much more so than himself. It was not long before he learned the reason. Through the Steins, the Savoy and their like, the smart people found contact with the amusing crowd of stage beauties, matinée idols, clever playwrights and composers, opera-singers, comédiennes, and all the rest who went to make up that bizarre, wicked, but entrancing, world of Broadway, and whose society was now eagerly sought by the most fastidious of Fifth Avenue hostesses because they “did something.”

Rufus began to perceive that already the door stood half-way open into an enchanted and joyous land of gay abandonment. His chance to slip gracefully in came even more quickly than he had dared to hope. Two tables away a girl, whose profile had all along attracted him, turned at a remark from her companion, and tossed a smile of recognition in their direction.

“I wondered if she’d notice us,” remarked Stein.

“Nothing gets by little Mercedes!” answered Savoy.

“That reminds me——!”

He jotted something on the back of a menu and handed it to a waiter to take to her. Miss Mercedes

received and read it. Then borrowing the waiter's pencil, she scribbled:

"Am I coming? Sure! With bells on! M."

Savoy blew her a kiss.

"I'm having a little party Sunday night and I hadn't heard from yon proud beauty. I've asked Larry Dev-
ereaux and Dick Darcy and one or two others. Care to come? Glad to have you, if you've nothing more interesting on."

Rufus tried to be equally casual as he replied that he'd like to come if he hadn't anything on—he'd ask his secretary when he returned to the office.

Mr. Stein called for the bill, paid it, and they got up. The tables were emptying rapidly, owing to the approach of the theatre-hour. On their way to the door they came face to face with Diana and Darcy. Miss Kayne nodded familiarly to the other two.

"Hello, Al! Hello, Tad!"

Then regarding her father with an air of quizzical disapproval, she concluded:

"And hello, pa-pa!"

CHAPTER XV

A REAL PARTY

RUFUS, as might have been foreseen, managed to adjust his engagements so that he was able to attend Mr. Savoy's party the following Sunday night. This was not difficult, for Elizabeth was going to the Jameses, who were having an affair of their own, the attraction being a colored missionary from Mozambique.

Rufus had balked at the color line—an excellent excuse; but Edna had succeeded in entangling Maitland as well as Mrs. Brice-Brewster, Homer Graham and the Krasses. The Jameses, in fact, were rather too fond of startling their dinner-guests by producing out of the tall hat of their hospitality an unexpected rabbit in the shape of a Hindoo, a Chinaman, an Ethiope, or a Christianized cannibal, who could entertain them all afterward with strange gurgling songs, syncopated with roars and grunts and accompanied by the rattle of castanets made of human bones—for there is fashion even in philanthropy.

Providence having thus smiled upon his enterprise, Rufus donned his dress clothes and fared forth upon his second blooming. The primrose path—he had yielded the motor to his wife for the evening with relief—led straight to Broadway. He felt, in spite of himself, as he joined the crowds pouring from the movie palaces, a little out of place—the people were a pretty cheap lot, he thought—shoddy against the scintillating kaleidoscope of the flashing signs. Such radiance should fall

only upon brave men and beautiful women, who presumably would not use the pavements.

Mr. Savoy's apartment proved to be over a famous restaurant, but it was none the less elegant for that, and the convenient juxtaposition enabled its owner to entertain easily and promiscuously. The beautiful women and brave men were all there when Rufus arrived, and the negro who took his tall hat gave him, in exchange, a soiled check numbered "189."

Rufus, fluttered as a girl at her first dance, regretted that he had not realized the informal character of the gathering and worn a dinner-jacket, like the other men. He stood stiffly in the doorway looking for his host, very much in the way.

In one room dancing was going on, the guests resting occasionally to watch some vaudeville favorite do his or her latest stunt. Opening out of this was a buffet with a bar—"wide open" and crowded. In the other rooms—some well lighted, others not so much so—couples came and went or sat in secluded nooks, or gay groups told stories to one another. Indeed, the side-shows seemed to be more popular than the main tent, and competition among the performers was often such that some of them were with difficulty restrained from interrupting the offerings of others to give the company the benefit of their own.

The effusiveness of the greetings, the back-slapping, the "hello, dearies," and the inevitable suffix of "sweet-heart" and "darling," the way they all patted and pawed and hung on to one another, embarrassed Rufus. From time to time some celebrated diva would make an appearance, calling attention to her entrance by throwing her arms violently about the neck of a no less famous manager or producer. There was a noticeably

Semitic flavor to the men, the racial characteristics of the women being somewhat concealed by their enamel. Rufus was annoyed by the lack of conversational syntax, recognizing with a sinking of the heart that in many respects Jarmon was socially superior to the majority of those present, among whom Devereaux and Darcy were conspicuous by their absence. What would the Jameses think if they could see him there! Then his eye caught the profile of a well-known member of the judiciary and he brightened. Simultaneously a hand clapped his shoulder.

"Honored!" said Mr. Savoy. "Let's duck this riff-raff and get hold of some real people. Of course I have to ask everybody. Any one you want particularly to meet?"

Rufus took courage at this recognition of his own paramount standing. After all, any big jam on Fifth Avenue was almost as heterogeneous. He decided to adopt a casual "just-looked-in-for-a-moment" manner.

Mr. Savoy led him along until they reached a small smoking-room or den where a select company were sitting; among them the pretty girl Rufus had noticed at the Croyon. Her declared intention of being present had been in his mind when he had refused James's invitation to dinner. Well, there she was! Rufus was introduced to the members of the party and presently found himself talking to Mercedes.

He was struck at once by her extreme youth—nineteen, she admitted, with a childish laugh at his surprise. Only a year older than Sheila. Nineteen was really quite old, she told him. She had been on the stage since she was ten. But it flattered him to believe that her slightly deferential—almost respectful—manner was not due entirely to his age. Amid the noise and

boisterous familiarity of the other rooms he had felt out of his element, but here in the quiet intimacy of their retirement he regained all his usual confidence and did his best to make himself agreeable without being paternal.

After all, there was nothing out of the way in what he was doing. It merely showed him to be alive. Miss Delaval—for such was her surname—struck him as unusually intelligent and even more attractive than his recollection of her. He had assumed that she was “professional,” but his unfamiliarity with the gayer life of the city had prevented his recognition of her identity. Had this not been so he would have been more upon his guard; but as it was, apart from the fact that she was clearly anxious to make a favorable impression upon him, he took her very nearly at her face value—which was certainly high.

He had never talked to an actress before, although he found it hard to believe that she was an actress and a show-girl at that. Apart from a few minor mispronunciations which were only occasionally disconcerting, she might have been one of the young things who were always running in and out of the Fifth Avenue house—only prettier.

The word did not do her justice. Exquisite was more like it! All the charm of Miss Dolan with the added fascination of the unknown. And she had something elusively provocative about her that made Rufus want to climb over the wall of her reserve and see for himself what there was behind it.

He could attract when he chose, and she let him see that she was complimented by his interest. She was so natural, earnest, and trustful—and he so ready to be trusted—that they were soon talking with entire

informality; and she knew just when to place her hand impulsively upon his knee—the others had gone out—and let him enclose it for a moment in his. She was so young, her limbs so slender, her skin so softly warm, her eyes so guileless, the little chuckle of her laugh so contagious! A wonder child! And like a child she talked.

Part of what he learned surprised and interested him. What she really liked most, she said, was books—history, poetry—a good novel once in a while for variety—music, real music such as was provided by the concerts at Carnegie Hall—and nature, the open country, the sea-shore. People didn't know how hard a show-girl had to work! If only she could have time to read and cultivate herself! She gazed appealingly at Rufus as she said that she had almost never been in an automobile, and out of compassion Rufus forgave her the horror of the accented third syllable.

She did have the audacity to say that she had never been farther from New York than Atlantic City. She had loved it there—the bathing and lying on the hot sand. She and her mother had gone there together for a week last year. Oh, yes, she lived with her mother—had always lived with her.

Rufus, only half convinced but eager to be convinced, assured himself that here was a sweet girl who had never had a chance. The trouble with her life, she said with a pathetic droop of her shoulders, was that she knew so few decent men. This kind of thing, waving a graceful hand toward the room containing the jazzing crowd, seemed to her a foolish waste of time and money! She would have preferred a quiet evening of music and conversation, or perhaps a walk around the reservoir. Of course she had to work for her living, and had no choice,

but did he suppose if she had Mrs. Wingate's money she would be fox-trotting around with one of those simpering little *gigolos* or with that Hindoo or whatever he was who was dancing with her now?

Rufus, bewildered by her apparent ingenuousness, wondered if such innocence were possible in view of her associations. He could hardly believe it, yet looking at her demure little face and listening to her artless chatter he wanted to believe that the miracle was true. At any rate, this girl was talking to him because she liked to talk to him. He had made a hit with her. There must be something about him still, in spite of his grizzled hair. He had not a suspicion that she knew Diana. Perhaps his very maturity was an asset. He was glad he had come. He was not going to rush into anything, but this girl really had fallen for him. Well, he would see what happened.

When she said that she must go home he held her hand a long time. He would have kissed it had he known how to do so with the proper air. And Mercedes, with a pathetic look, thanked him gratefully for being so nice to her. He made no reference to a possible continuation of their acquaintance; and neither did she—an exhibition of good taste which pleased him. No use being in a hurry! He had made a good start.

He lingered on, meeting in due course an ex-ambassador, a famous moving-picture star, several leading actresses, a pickle millionaire, Degautet the sculptor, and a horde of lesser celebrities. Everybody seemed to be on the most cordial terms with everybody else, and many of the ladies laid hands on him as if he had been their friend from boyhood. After all, it was genuine, spontaneous! Why knock anything that was real? Rufus protested to himself that he liked it. He was

glad he had made the loan to the Alpha-Omega. Jolly, good-hearted, impulsive folk, these of the Rialto!

The colored missionary from Mozambique had long since ceased his exhortation to the Jameses' two hundred golden friends ranged in the two hundred golden chairs—kept down in the basement when not in use—but a perforated roll still hung dejectedly by one spindle from the Æolian organ on the upper landing.

Rufus thanked his stars he hadn't been there! And yet—and yet—as he inserted his latch-key in his own front door on Fifth Avenue, he wondered—half shame-facedly—if, after all, the nicest people weren't really the nicest people.

CHAPTER XVI

CLAUDIA'S ESCAPE

CLAUDIA, Lady Harrowdale, stood at the library window of "The Bandbox," her country house in Surrey, smoking a cigarette and watching young Hawker sauntering toward the clump of firs at the foot of the garden. Mr. Hawker had walked over from "Folly House" for lunch and to make—for the thirteenth time—the kindly suggestion that she should, with his assistance, give her lord and master a taste of his own medicine.

Hawker seemed a well-meaning lad—slightly corrupted perhaps by the general social demoralization of the post-war period, but who wasn't?—and he took no pains to conceal the fact that he liked Claudia very much and hated to see her so neglected. But in spite of her gratitude for his affection and companionship she had to-day given him quite plainly to understand that he must not come again. As his broad back in its well-cut Norfolk jacket disappeared among the tree-trunks, she felt like a marooned sailor who sees the ship that has abandoned him on his island vanish over the horizon.

Leaning her forehead against the cool pane and staring out into the drizzle, it seemed to her as if she had done nothing else—except to bring little Peter and Bess into the world—for nearly four years; nothing but that, and quarrel with Harrowdale when he deigned to put in an appearance, which was now seldom. Ever since Bess

had been born he had been entirely devoid of shame in his various escapades. There was even a woman from the village who had been seen constantly in London with him.

Claudia could not understand why the neighbors in some paradoxical way seemed to hold her responsible for his desertion. In England, apparently, it was not respectable to be deserted by one's husband. The stability of the social order was so eternally precious that if any disgruntled mate kicked over the marital traces, the easiest and safest course, no matter whether the wife was in any way to blame or not, was for people to drop her at the same time that they dropped him. Harrowdale had brought her down into a nest of hidebound old county families who had paid her scant courtesy in the first instance, and now she found herself ostracized.

During the four years in which she had lived in "The Bandbox" she had aged fifteen. She had left America a gay, triumphant "war bride" looking forward to a life of active, colorful service in her husband's country—and had instead found herself married to a slacker and a rake. She had borne his infidelities as long as she could and then had taken the advice of counsel, who had informed her that since she lacked evidence of legal cruelty—although his adultery was open and unabashed—she could not win her freedom under English law.

Harrowdale, who watched all her movements, derided her. So she had tried to have the law upon him, had she? Well, two could work that game! She had better not try to play him any trick! Five days later she had received a letter from his solicitors stating that her children had become wards in Chancery and that any attempt on her part to take them out of the country or interfere with them without the permission of the Lord

Chancellor would be a contempt of court punishable by indefinite imprisonment.

Indignantly she had gone back to her distinguished counsel, who had with reluctance—for she was still a pretty woman—acknowledged that Messrs. Skifington, Wells & Company had correctly enunciated the law. Harrowdale, it seemed, had deposited some trifling sum in Chancery for the benefit of little Peter and little Bess when they should become of age, with the result that although the Lord Chancellor probably had not the slightest suspicion of their existence, they were now under his legal protection and could not be removed from within sight of his eagle eye. A little American mouse in an English legal rat-trap!

Harrowdale, swaggering, had challenged her to defy the Chancery—unless her father was willing to talk business. He did not like the idea of his children becoming Americans, but he had no money and—well, she might write to her father and suggest some sort of a *quid pro quo*. Small wonder that her dark-brown hair had lost its lustre, that her face, once full of charming contours, had grown peaked, and that the moth-wing bloom on her dusky cheeks had vanished. She was virtually a prisoner in her own house, unable to free herself from a worthless husband frankly unfaithful to his marriage vows, unable to leave England unless she left her children behind her.

Small wonder that, in spite of little Peter who was enthusiastically pushing a woolly bear on wheels along the hearth-rug, she saw young Hawker's figure vanish with a tinge of regret. Why, as he had said, should not what was sauce for the gander be sauce for the goose as well? It might have been had not Ventnor, the butler, who, although paid by her, was a spy of her hus-

band's, informed her at that moment that a gentleman was calling on Lady Harrowdale—and handed her the card of Captain Nigel Craig.

At first she assumed that he must have come to ask her for a subscription to some war charity. Even so, any caller was a welcome relief, for apart from young Hawker, Claudia had seen no one for a week; and she welcomed him cordially, especially since she noticed that he had very large and beautiful gray eyes, and made up her mind instantly that she would give him a subscription.

Nigel, expecting to find a dashing American beauty, worthy sister to those two other young moderns, Diana and Sheila, was shocked at her appearance. He knew that she was younger than Diana, yet she looked far older, and in her eyes, even when she smiled, as she was doing then, he could read tragic signs. He happened to be staying near by, he explained, and as he had had the pleasure of meeting her sister in New York, had taken the liberty of dropping in to see her. Claudia was delighted. Then, Ventnor having silently departed, Nigel told her why he had come and showed her her father's letter. The girl's breath quickened and the color mounted to her drab cheeks and the tears to her eyes.

"We mustn't talk here," Nigel whispered. "I've a closed car at the inn garage. We can talk in that. My chauffeur is perfectly safe. We've got to act quickly. Can you meet me in twenty minutes, say, on the road through the woods to Denby?"

"In ten," she answered. "I'll be walking on the right-hand side."

She rang for Ventnor and, when he came, said with a real thrill at playing a part:

"I'm sorry, Captain Craig, that I can't afford to give

you a subscription. I'm sure it's a very noble work."

They shook hands punctiliously and Ventnor showed the visitor out. Five minutes later Claudia, her knitted shopping-bag on her arm, started for the village. From his second-story window young Hawker watched her through a spy-glass until she turned into the Denby road. Then he reached for a cigarette. "She can't stand it forever," he muttered. "She'll cave in sooner or later!"

Claudia walked slowly through the woods and soon heard behind her the muffled cough of a Klaxon. A limousine passed her, stopped, and Nigel leaped out.

"Much better!" he declared as together they took their seats inside. "Now we can talk all we want. Do you mind if I smoke? Have a cigarette? This E. Phillips Oppenheim sort of thing does seem rather silly! All right, Nisbet, go ahead slowly until I stop you. Well, here we are! I suppose you thought you had been quite forgotten!"

In the broad light that fell through the plate-glass windows of the car Claudia marvelled at the sweetness of his smile and the play of color under his brown skin—a complexion that any woman might have envied. Could this girlish-looking boy have slept in the slime of Ypres and Mennin—this young Lochinvar who had come out of the West to rescue her?

He had been in London a month, he said, laying his plans, consulting her lawyers, and getting a line on Harrowdale. The solicitors had funked it—had absolutely refused to help them. You couldn't blame them much, considering that they were right under the Lord Chancellor's paw and might be held responsible if their connection with the matter ever leaked out. So he had had to make all the arrangements himself. Rather good fun!

He had had a man watching her husband and knew everything he did. Harrowdale would be in London until the following Sunday. This was Tuesday. There was an American vessel—a three-masted auxiliary schooner—lying in the Solent waiting to take her to America. Let her pack in valises what things she needed for herself and her children for the voyage, and give out to the servants that she was tired of being left all alone by herself down in the country, and that she was going up to town to stay for a while at an hotel. She must also pack and send up to London by goods-train enough trunks to give verisimilitude to her statement. Everything was prepared, and a launch would be waiting in an inlet to take them to the schooner, which once they were aboard would weigh anchor and carry them back to her own country, where the laws were so much better adapted to accomplish justice.

Claudia was ecstatic at first. Then her smile faded. Bess was less than a year old! If it should be rough—the exposure in the launch! Nigel reassured her. They would pick a fair day. Really there was nothing to fear. If they did not act quickly Harrowdale might do something which would make any such attempted escape abortive—take the children off somewhere with him, for example. It was the best opportunity they were ever likely to have.

Claudia endeavored to suppress her fears. She ought, if possible, Nigel said, to take a female servant to help her with the children. Had she a single maid out of the lot whom she could trust? Claudia assured him that luckily there was one whose loyalty could not be questioned—old Spedding, the nurse who had been with Peter since his birth. Ventnor might be a Judas—so might be one or more of the others, but faithful Spedding

she could absolutely count on. Good! Now, to go on with the plan—Lady Harrowdale should take the afternoon train for London with her children, having bought through tickets in order to avert suspicion. At Basingstoke, however, they should all get out. He would be waiting for them there in the car and motor them back to the coast, to the hamlet near Christ Church where the launch would be waiting. By midnight they would be outside the three-mile limit and the Lord Chancellor could go hang!

He outlined the plan to her in a slightly whimsical way, as if the whole business were rather melodramatic and absurd even if—for some preposterous reason—necessary. Indeed, he found it hard to believe, as they sat there so comfortably in the cushioned car chatting through the smoke of their cigarettes, that he wasn't talking balderdash.

Was it possible in this the twentieth century, when fifteen million men had just died for freedom, that an Englishman who was brazenly unfaithful to his wife—made no bones about it—and did nothing to support her or her children, could nevertheless hold them all prisoners under a legal fiction? Could he arbitrarily refuse to allow the woman whom he had deceived and with whom he no longer wished to live to take the children, whom he would not maintain, and return to her family?

Was it conceivable that down in this quiet countryside, if she took a single step to exert her natural maternal rights over her offspring, some bewigged functionary, sitting in smoky chambers before a green baize-covered desk in London, would issue a thing called a writ of attachment, and hand it to a clerk, who would deliver it to a sheriff commanding him to "take into his custody

the body of the said Claudia, Lady Harrowdale, and produce her" before him, the said Lord Chancellor of England, for chastisement; and that, if the said Claudia wanted to keep her beautiful young body for her own uses and refused to go with the sheriff or whatever, the telegraph instruments would begin to click, and sleepy constables would be routed out of bed, and posses assembled, and the yeomanry called out if need be, and the coast guard notified, and the admiralty send wireless messages for destroyers—all because the said Claudia, out of love for her children, wished to bring them up beyond the reach of a drunken, dissolute father? It just couldn't be!

Things were not like that! It was not only mediæval—it was barbaric! A mad dream worthy of Lewis Carroll! Would any Lord Chancellor, no matter how dried up, order this lovely creature to jail if she defied him for her children's sake? The solicitors had said so. It was the law! Yet it was no more silly than that because a half-crazy anarchist had shot an heir presumptive to one of the Balkan States in far-off Sarajevo, he, Nigel Craig, should have had four brothers killed with high explosives and should himself have lain in a hospital for half a year. The world had not believed any such thing possible. He could hardly believe this possible. A bally England! He resented the situation bitterly. So this was what his brothers had died for? That he——!

"Look here," he said, as he ordered the chauffeur to turn around. "The only thing we've got to be careful of is that no one in your employ, or in the village, has the least suspicion of what you're up to. We mustn't give 'em time to think it over. If you start to-morrow you'd better not pack your bags until after lunch.

You can leave your maid behind to attend to the trunks and send them up to London. Funny, isn't it—to sit here and talk like this! Planning, as they say in the movies, a 'get-away.' I must say it's asking you to take me a good deal on faith!"

She touched his sleeve. "I know whom I can trust!" she said.

Nigel raised her hand to his lips. For him the act was not merely chivalric, but a kind of sacrament. This girl was putting herself unreservedly in his hands—herself, her life, her children—a grave responsibility. Already he felt for her something more than mere sympathy. Fate, which had hitherto treated them both so malignantly, had thrust them together in a strange way. Was Fate perhaps trying to make amends?

"That villain butler of yours," he remarked as they neared the village—"Ventnor's his name, isn't it?—he writes to your husband every second day. But I don't worry much over him. The chap I'm afraid of is that fellow Hawker—who lives across the way from you. He's spent most of his time with Harrowdale whenever he's gone up to London. I've an idea they're hatching something!"

He was unprepared for the result of this declaration upon his companion. She turned suddenly white and leaned her head against the side of the car.

"Oh!" she moaned. "Take me away from here! Take me away!"

For the first time Claudia realized the depth of her husband's infamy. The beast was willing to give her to Hawker in order to have an additional hold over her—a defense to a possible suit for divorce—a counter-action!

The car had stopped at the turn in the road above the

grove of firs behind "The Bandbox." The rain had ended and bars of reddish-golden light were slanting through the tall ranks of spear-like boles. A faint mist rose here and there from the damp ground like fairy pipe-smoke.

"Well—" said Nigel. "I suppose you had better get out here."

He opened the door and put one foot upon the running-board, possessed by a curious excitement. The thing was becoming vivid. A real adventure! After all, she was taking a chance! He was asking a tremendous lot of her! And she looked so childlike, so frail.

"I suppose I must!" she sighed. "I hate to go back to that house!"

She held out her hand and took his with a firm pressure. Then, closing her eyes for a moment, she arose, and he helped her down into the road.

"At Basingstoke, then—to-morrow night at seven. I'll be just across from the station," he said, smiling.

"Very well! Good night!" she answered, her eyes holding his.

"Good night!" he replied, and as she turned away from him and started down the road, he added under his breath—"you darling!"

Without reflecting on Sir Percy Harrowdale's intelligence, it must be admitted that it had never once occurred to him that Claudia would take the bit in her teeth. What with her child-bearing and her loneliness she had seemed too cowed to do anything. Young Mr. Hawker, however, with time hanging heavy on his hands, found pleasurable excitement in imagining all sorts of possibilities. That she could be faithful to her husband struck him as so wholly unlikely as to be ridiculous. He'd heard all about these fast American girls! They

didn't stop at anything! If she wouldn't fall for him, why—there must be somebody else. She was merely playing a deucedly clever game, that was all!

Strolling by the inn after he had seen her go out, he learned that the dark, good-looking chap who had lunched there had then gone over to "The Bandbox," had afterward paid his bill, and started off toward Denby.

"Aha!" thought Hawker. "That's the road my lady took."

He decided that a little exercise would be a good thing for him. If he walked fast enough he could certainly overtake Claudia in half a mile, and if he didn't overtake her—well, the chances were that she was taking a spin with the dark, good-looking young man.

He did not overtake her and, accordingly, he strolled off the road and sat down behind a rock among the firs, whence a half-hour later he was an inconspicuous spectator of the little tableau at the door of the car. It was good enough! If he couldn't have her himself, the next best thing was to spot the fellow who did have her. That evening he sent a wire to Harrowdale from the next town.

"Our ladybird has found a mate. Better stay away. I am on the watch and will report."

When at three o'clock the following afternoon he met Ventnor as usual in the village, he found the butler much excited. Lady Harrowdale had unexpectedly decided to go up to London on the five o'clock, taking the children with her. The trunks were to follow next day. He couldn't make it out—so sudden like. Hawker said nothing. He knew what was doing. She was going to London to be near the dark, good-looking young man. He must keep track of her and see where she went.

He had no particular objection to a day or so in London. On the whole, he thought he might as well take the five o'clock himself.

"Why, hello!" he exclaimed in feigned astonishment as he ran into her with Peter and Bess on the "up" platform. "Goin' up to town? Is Harrowdale at the Berkeley? The fellow never tells me where he's stoppin'!"

For a moment she feared he would get into the compartment with them, but she carefully selected a "no-smoking" one, and to her relief, after promising to get a porter for her at Waterloo, he sought another.

Once on the train, with the children upon the seat beside her and her luggage in the rack, Claudia experienced her first anxieties. Until that moment excitement had buoyed her up and she had had no time to take counsel of her fears. But now in the gathering twilight of an ominous nightfall doubt as to the wisdom of her course possessed her. Had she the right to hazard her children's lives in a winter crossing of the Atlantic on a small sailing-vessel? To ruin their digestions perhaps with coarse food or condensed milk? They might even be drowned in the launch if the weather were rough! Hadn't she better take Peter and Bess up to London after all and put them safely to bed in the Berkeley!

Peter was lying flat on his back with his head on his nurse's lap, the woolly bear mounting guard upon his small stomach. Bess, too, was sound asleep. After all, what right had she to jeopardize their safety? Then in the dusk she seemed to see Nigel standing there beside them, feel his lips upon her hand, and his gray eyes fixed on hers. And she knew that she must go—not for the children's sake alone, but for her own.

"Basingstoke! Basingstoke!"

The guard threw open the door, letting in a blast of cold air. Terror seized her, but she signalled for a porter, and, with Spedding, bundled out the still sleeping Peter and Bess. With her heart fluttering she followed the porter, expecting every instant to see Hawker behind them. The bell rang, the whistle blew, the train moved out. Next instant Nigel was beside her lifting Peter from her arms.

"This way. Everything is all right."

"I was so frightened," she gasped. "Mr. Hawker was on the train. I think he was following us."

Three minutes and they were off, roaring southward through the darkness whence they had come, now slowing up to rumble through a half-lighted town, then hurtling on through miles of countryside, never stopping, never hesitating.

"You've a good chauffeur!" she said as the car swung sharply around a turn and threw her against him.

"Yes—very!" he replied. "He knows every inch of road between here and Land's End."

It had begun to snow as they left Winchester and great flakes had splotched the windows, sagging down in crystal masses to the bottom of the panes, but by the time they had passed through Southampton it had changed to rain and they were running along narrow country by-roads through a thick mist which turned back the headlights like a stone wall.

Once near Minster they stopped suddenly, confronted by the huge white face of an astonished cart-horse surrounded by a frosty halo, and shortly after that the motor slowed down as the road became soft and rutty, and now and again a bush scratched the sides.

It seemed to her as if they had been travelling all

night, although the clock on the dashboard showed that it was only just after ten. They were approaching Christ Church, Nigel said. Claudia smelled the sea and once more her heart failed her. The car inside was unlighted, so that Nigel could not see her face, but his hand reached for hers in the darkness.

Then with a bump or two and a lurch they stopped. Fearfully she looked out. A sailor in dripping oilskins stood by the roadside holding a lantern. It was pouring now—the drops leaping up in companies as they struck the puddles.

“Here we are! Only a step from the gang-plank!” laughed Nigel as he took up the inert form of little Peter. “We can dry off on board. The launch is only a few feet away.”

The sailor took the luggage and disappeared. The chauffeur had climbed down off his seat and was standing cap in hand, unmindful of the rain. For the first time Claudia noticed his features. They were those of a Crusader.

“Lady Harrowdale,” said Nigel, “I want to present my friend Captain Nisbet. He was with me in Belgium and volunteered for this service.”

The water leaked into her shoes as Claudia, clinging to Nigel's arm in the darkness, floundered through the slime of the reeds that fringed the inlet. A moment before she had been dry, warm, protected; now, but a step or two away from the motor, she was groping her way through the stinging rain, her face whipped by the reeds, exposed to the biting wind which drew in from the sea across the marsh.

What might not lurk equally near outside the slender, swaying circle of light that Nigel's torch threw against

the swirling fog? Seasickness, cold, hunger, every kind of physical discomfort—shipwreck—death perhaps? She was about to abandon terra firma for the uncertainties of a winter sea, on which their ship would be tossed about like a leaf or smothered beneath mountainous waves. Had she the right to expose her two children to such dangers? There was yet time to change her mind.

The motor was still there—twenty paces behind them in the road! Then against the mist she seemed to see Harrowdale's leering face. And she had a momentary vision of Hawker, as smiling over his glass of port he had asked her so casually the day before to take a run with him down to Wales. No! Better that they should all drown together than that Peter and Bess should be brought up under the influence of such a man!

Next instant she was beside the launch, and the sailor was helping her in. How tiny it was! There was hardly room for them to sit down. She turned to speak to Nigel, but already they were pushing off. The bottom of the launch ground over the silt, slid free and slipped into the current. The tide was running out and they let her drift. There was little motion and Claudia took courage. She had been a fool to be so afraid! Nigel handed her his flask and she took a sip. It burned her throat but it somehow gave her confidence. It was rather funny, the way she and Spedding were sitting in the bottom of the boat—right in pools of water—each holding a child! She even laughed a little hysterically!

The launch swayed and swung half round sideways. Distant lights—white lights—were running by in streaks. The boat began to bob up and down. There was a stench of gasoline. Suddenly, with a roar like a machine-gun the engine started just behind her, and the launch straightened and shot ahead, spanking the waves.

A gust of spray leaped over the bow and fell upon them. Peter began to scream. She tried to still his cries, but she was terrified also.

The launch was doing all sorts of queer things now, lifting itself high into the air and then gyrating downward again with a strange, sickening, scooping motion. Any instant they might upset. She could not maintain her balance. They were going over! She screamed. Then she felt Nigel's arm tight about her.

Again they rose into a staggering sea that almost overturned them. They were lifted high in the blackness—up—up—toward a bright yellow gleam—a lighthouse?—then sucked down, dropping away from it to unfathomable depths.

Again they shot toward the light! She heard hoarse shouts from above borne on the wind. The engine stopped. She saw waves creaming in a black abyss and ropes swinging. Nigel was holding up Peter toward the ropes. He must not! She could not let him risk Peter's life! They struck something heavily. She was grasped by rough hands and lifted toward the light. She could never cling to the ropes—never reach those lights!

The launch sunk from beneath her, leaving her clinging to something wet and slimy. Hysterically she clung to it—vowing never to leave it! More arms seized her and she was dragged up and over a hard thing that hurt her shins. Her legs gave way and she sank upon a deck. . . .

CHAPTER XVII

WEED AND FLOWER

THE alchemy of what we call love defies analysis. No matter how "thick and slab" the gruel of passion, there will be at the bottom of the witches' caldron some tiny fleck of gold to reflect the flash of an angel's wing. Whatever the love may be—whether a temporary physical reaction, an ecstasy, or a sacrament—there is in it, unless we be but brute beasts, some element of the spiritual. Wherever there is tenderness in the drawing together of two people, within or without what we call law—there is mixed in the evil something of the divine. The danger lies in mistaking the one for the other.

It would be difficult to conceive a more deliberate seeking of the merely carnal than that of Rufus Kayne. It was no more than that in his own mind, and he made no effort to deceive himself into thinking that it was anything else. Yet his instinct was not utterly sensual. He was a lonely man and his nature yearned for affection. His marriage was arid of sentiment; he was a stranger to the hearts of his children; he had few friends—and none who really loved him.

This longing to love and to be loved—tinged as it was with an unsatisfied natural appetite—he took to be wholly sinful, for, looking always for the worst in others, he looked always for the worst in himself. Had he but known it, this yearning for love was a tender flower of the soul that might have been nurtured into a thing of

spiritual beauty. But beside it grew a rank and baneful weed heavy with sinister perfume. Grasping at the weed, he plucked them both and, for a space, with the odor of the one was mingled the fragrance of the other. Then the fragile flower withered, while the weed stretched its shoots toward his heart.

He awoke next morning rejuvenated and with an exquisite sense of adventure. Lying there under his silk coverlet waiting for the new second man to bring in his breakfast-tray, he saw himself justified in everything. The chintz had never glowed so brightly, the aroma of the coffee had never been so satisfying, the toast so crisp, the marmalade so delicious. The new servant, who had replaced Capper and who had hitherto been in fear of him, was surprised by his geniality and left the room convinced that he had made good and that his job was safe. Rufus, propped luxuriously against the pillows, having eaten his breakfast, lit a cigarette, and gave himself over to day-dreaming. He perceived that the world was not so bad. A little touch of kindness, a cheery word—the “personal note”—was all it needed. He even laid his hand on Jarmon’s shoulder as the butler gave him his hat.

“You’ve been with us a long time, Jarmon!” he said. “How the years fly!”

“No one would suspect it, lookin’ at you, sir!” answered the pantry diplomat, and Rufus mentally raised him ten.

The avenue seemed brilliantly gay to him. Everybody was smiling. “Laugh and the world laughs with you!” Miss Dolan did not know what had come over him. She had never seen her employer so boyish, and her hopes rose. He cracked a joke at the directors’ meeting, and, remembering that Elizabeth liked violets,

ordered a double bunch sent to the house from Thorley's.

He spent a quiet hour thinking about the Mercedes affair, and was glad he had made no further advances at the time. There was no use being excited, letting the girl think he couldn't get on without her. He could get on without her if it came to that. His eye switched to the trim back at the desk outside his door. "Christian slave." He would go slow. If anything happened, it must be natural and—as it were—inevitable.

Borrowing the telephone-book from Miss Dolan, he ascertained Miss Delaval's number, but checked an impulse to call her up and ask how she was. However, feeling that it would be only courteous, and certainly good business, to acknowledge her existence, he stopped on his way out at the public telephone adjoining the lunch-counter in the basement, and ordered another bunch of violets sent to her address.

During the succeeding weeks—whether from excitement or from altruism—Rufus became so changed as to be almost unrecognizable. At home he was considerate and even demonstrative; at the office he jollied his subordinates and exhibited a keen interest in their family affairs. He lived in a state of delicious perturbation. Mercedes's little note thanking him for the violets had raised him to ecstasy. It had contained no salutation or signature, reading simply:

"How dear of you to send my favorite flowers. They always make me so happy. I hope you are happy too."

He wondered why merely leaving off their names made it seem so much more intimate. Could it be that she had done so in case that note should fall into other

hands, instinctively aware that he might not wish their acquaintance to be known? That was considerate, or, at any rate, discreet. Naturally she would be discreet. Girls on the stage had to be. An actress! And a beauty! Rufus felt an increased circulation around his thorax. Well, he would be equally discreet.

She had written her acknowledgment in longhand, and, although, of course, it did not require a reply, it was a good opening—too good to let pass entirely. But he would not write. He was too wise a bird for that! He would send her a typewritten note without any name at the beginning—just as she had done—which would render his signature—possibly compromising—superfluous. He had never used a typewriter, but he sent Miss Dolan to a *matinée*, locked the outer door, and fiddled with the keys. In the end he gave it up.

Three days later he sent more violets and, after allowing plenty of time for them to arrive, telephoned to her apartment. She was out, and he felt the world to be empty. He had not left his name or number, because he preferred not to have her call him up on his office telephone, although he did not wish to hurt her feelings by telling her so.

Accordingly, he was delighted when next morning he found an envelope addressed in her handwriting among the letters upon his desk—less so on discovery that Miss Dolan had slit the envelope along with the rest of the mail. But he said nothing about it. He could not remark out of a clear sky, no matter how casually: "Oh, by the way, Miss Dolan, if any other letters addressed in that handwriting happen to come in my mail, you need not open them after this." Impossible! No, there must be no correspondence—unless he hired a private box at the post-office, and he did not purpose to let the

girl think he was in it as deep as that. Besides, it was rather too surreptitious. All letters were dangerous. The telephone was the thing.

Thus there developed between them that most modern of relationships—a love-affair by telephone, so stimulating to rapid intimacy. If imagination enhances the attractions of the unseen letter-writer, how much more active will that imagination prove when aided by the caressing tones of a silvery voice or an endearing little laugh. He often spoke of her as his “Voice on the Wire.” Soon he was calling her up every morning on his way down-town, hungry to hear her drowsy tones answering from her bed, for she did not get up until noon. And then, of course, he had to call her again—she could not call him over the trust company’s line—before he went out to lunch.

During this period Rufus saw a great deal of Mr. Savoy and went to several of his parties, at which Mercedes was invariably present. He also was unusually affectionate with Elizabeth and sent her many bunches of violets. His benignity was ubiquitous. He was intensely proud of his success with this darling of the footlights—particularly after he had discovered how much of a celebrity she was. He wondered what the Corner Boys would say if they knew old Rufus was on the loose! It gave him an exultant satisfaction to go to the Revels and—as he watched her dancing amid the thunder of the little wooden hammers—to say to himself that this glorious young thing was his or might be if he but dropped his handkerchief.

Toying with sin at this comparatively safe distance, he had no particular consciousness of guilt even when he kissed his wife. What guilt he felt gave only an added zest to the affair—“bread eaten in secret.” For

of course he told nobody—kept it dark absolutely—allowed no whisper nor hint nor even suspicion to escape—although he had a furtive mistrust of Miss Dolan's apparent ignorance of what was going on, for Mercedes, in spite of everything, had been obliged to call him on his office wire once or twice.

Savoy and he took to lunching together with frequency up-town, and Rufus was astonished at the tremendous profits shown by the quarterly balance-sheets of the moving-picture producing companies. The selected producers, "directors," and managers to whom he was introduced seemed to be rolling in wealth. Quite inadvertently at his own solicitation he learned that Savoy thought well of the preferred stock of "Celebrated Celluloid"—a new concern—which paid eight per cent and carried a heavy bonus of common, and quietly bought five thousand shares without disclosing the fact to his new friend.

He was in exuberant spirits and spent an hour almost every evening with the old pirate, who had not seen Ruf' so perky for a long time. The dawn was coming and the birds were singing in the mysterious twilight.

He did not, however, altogether escape a feeling of cheapness. The fact that he, the president of the Utopia Trust Company, should have to go down to the basement to speak to Mercedes—drop a nickel in a slot in a fetid, overheated booth, smelling of wintergreen—murmur—and at times very distinctly articulate—tender nothings into a sticky mouthpiece while frowsy girls and mousy-looking boys were doing the same in other booths on either side of him—put his passion to a severe test.

Nevertheless, he could hear his heart thump as he waited expectantly for her sweetly modulated voice, and the blood would rush to his face at the words:

"Oh, it's you! How dear of you to call me up! Yes, the violets were lovely. Yes, I'm happy. As much as I can be." And one day she accidentally added a little "dear"—"I'm happy as much as I can be, dear"—and he felt the unspoken words—"without you."

It was so easy to make love to her over the telephone! Yet it was rather unsatisfying. In his imagination she daily grew more and more desirable. She had never asked him to call upon her. He would not have done so. But this telephone business was tantalizing nonsense. He pondered deeply the problem of how to see her without running the risk of being seen, discarding the possibility of taking her openly to any place of public amusement or restaurant—as he knew many men did their mistresses—and feeling—what was undoubtedly the fact—his very reputation for respectability to be a handicap.

Finally he evolved a clever plan, the very openness of which would disarm all suspicion. He and she would go independently to Washington Square and wait for the up-town bus. She should get in and climb to the top and, after she had taken her seat, he would go up and—without seeming to have done so intentionally—sit down beside her. Then having talked as much as they wished, they could get off separately—without any one being the wiser.

The plan worked perfectly, and Rufus experienced an exultant sense of proprietorship when Mercedes tripped coyly past him to the stage without even raising her eyes from beneath her little moleskin cap. Above, in the blue twilight of the arc-lamps, he squeezed the small gloved hand under her cape.

"How kind of you to come!" he whispered out of the corner of his mouth, pretending not to know her.

"I had to! You asked me, didn't you!" she sighed.

It was difficult to converse and yet not to converse—without being a ventriloquist—so he contented himself with holding her hand—kid-covered—for several miles. They repeated the adventure next day and then again, but while eminently safe, Rufus felt that he was not getting much out of it and that it was even somewhat *infra dig*. As if at his age he couldn't ask a woman to have tea with him! So rather dashingly—he thought—he took her first to a tea-house in Greenwich Village—"The Seven Buccaneers" or "The Scarlet Parrot" or something—and a week or so later to one of those quiet little English chop-houses in the Forties.

"Coming—but slow!" was little Mercedes's comment to Mr. Savoy.

"I'll give a party to crank him up!" said he. "He's worth playing with."

"All the same, I've only one life to live," she replied tartly. "If something doesn't happen pretty soon, I shall cut the whole thing. It hasn't cost him a cent. My time's too valuable!"

"Don't be an idiot!" cautioned her adviser. "Kayne's a big fellow. Give him time!"

To Rufus things seemed to be moving rapidly enough. He now met her regularly thrice a week for a walk in some secluded part of town, sent her books, fruit, or flowers daily, and offered to buy her a little runabout so that she could drive herself around the Park. This she refused. He had fallen by this time desperately in love with her and everything about her—her slim, lithe figure, her piquant little nose, her quizzical, twisted smile—her gurgling laugh. He was disconsolate without her; deliciously palpitant in her company. In his wilder moments he even considered the possibility of

getting a divorce from Elizabeth and doing the thing regularly. But he had never kissed her!

Then, unexpectedly, Mr. Savoy bade him to a friendly little Sunday-night dinner at his apartment, at which, among others, appeared young Fannin of the Oriental Trust in the company of a blond young woman with copperish hair. Rufus with a slight gasp of surprise perceived at once that this could not be the second Mrs. Fannin, and he was rather offended that under the circumstances Mercedes should have been invited.

However, it was a very quiet and well-behaved party, with just enough to drink, and afterward it separated into couples and wandered off idyllically through the rooms. Rufus found himself once more beside Mercedes on the divan of Mr. Savoy's smoking-den. Six weeks had elapsed since they had met there before—a lifetime! Now they called one another by their first names, knew one another's every trick of voice, speech, and gesture, had their own catch phrases, terms of endearment, and code of innuendo. They could hardly have been more intimate.

Sitting there together she was conscious that the atmosphere of the den was surcharged. Her moment was at hand. He had come hard but he had come at last. She could feel that he was trembling while he was puffing his Corona. She lowered her head and allowed her shoulders to droop toward the hands which she had folded in her lap, like the Henner picture of the Magdalen which she so much admired. As she waited, every sense on the alert, she could hear his shirt-front creak as he breathed. A reddish light fell from a brass lantern pierced with holes hanging overhead. She had not lit a cigarette—intentionally. Everything was ready. Fruition! Another instant and he would be crushing her to him. Rough stuff!

She waited. Cautiously she glanced up. What was the matter with him? Conscience? or merely cold feet? That was no way for a man to look! Suddenly a suspicion turned her sick! Was it possible that she had overplayed her game? That he had really fallen in love with her?

She was sick at having so bungled so simple a business. It would have been all right to let him invest her with qualities she did not possess if he could have married her, but he could not! He had a wife, a family—position. Her pretense of sweetness and innocence had been too successful and had roused his chivalry. What damnable foolishness! Was she going to lose it all?

Cold-blooded, mercenary little thing? Judge her not too severely! For what had been true of Rufus was also true of Mercedes. She too had plucked flower as well as weed. But as sex is more entwined with woman's tenderness than with man's, she, having at the time no other loyalty to restrain her, felt no hesitancy in making the relationship complete. Harried by men—living by her smiles and by her wits—drifting from one boarding-house or cheap apartment to another—getting her meals here and there—always in debt—subjected daily to insult, she suffered the embittered and jealous loneliness of the woman who faces the world by herself and knows that she can never be more than a plaything to the men who applaud and pet her.

In Rufus she saw not only a possible lover but a powerful friend, through whom she might achieve at best the glittering world of society—or even a possible marriage; at least, safety under his protection, a semi-respectability—a curious kind of “position.” She was grateful to him for his admiration, his friendship, his attentions. She really liked him—her sentiment for

him was more real than her callous "line" of speech disclosed.

He represented in her shoddy, vagrant existence, affection, tranquillity of mind, financial security, and stability. His friendship brought with it a sort of self-respect. With Rufus behind her she could tell all the Steins and the Savoyes to go hang. She may not have loved him, but she loved what he meant to her and she was genuinely fond of him. Without him her life would be—at least for a long time—dreary. How many wives can say more of their husbands? Therefore, she was willing to go the limit, while he was not!

Her intuition had told her the truth. Rufus, too, realized that the time had come. Things could not go on as they were. They had reached the point where he must either fish or cut bait. He had drunk a good deal at dinner and it had increased his natural sentimentality. In fact, as Mercedes had suspected, he had been getting entirely too sentimental of late and in consequence his conscience had begun to worry him severely. The flower, withered at first by its proximity to the heat of passion, suddenly revived under the dew of tenderness.

She had become a cherished object—too sweet for him to defile. He felt like a murderer for having made her love him. She was such a darling! Such a nice kid! She might possibly be damaged goods—how could you tell?—but he wouldn't take the chance of being the first, no matter if she did care for him and was ready to go the whole way. No, he'd made a mess of it! Got his feet in the molasses. What a coil! Poor little Mercedes! He must look out for her—protect her against himself—and perhaps herself.

"Look here, dear," he said suddenly and his eye glistened. "You've gone far enough with me!"

She lifted a face frightened to pallor.

"Do you mean it's all over?"

He nodded, swallowing.

"I thought you cared for me!" she expostulated.

"I do—God knows! That's why——"

Things were going all wrong. She moved her hand, palm upward, toward him—a gesture of sympathy and affection never failing of result. As he covered it with his, she saw that his cheeks were wet.

"I had no business to get you into this!" he said.

"I can't keep you and I can't bear to let you go! But it's my own fault."

"No! No!" she cried. "It's mine! Oh, Rufus!"

She wormed her slim, warm fingers into his and clung there. He pressed her wrist to his damp cheek.

"Darling!" he whispered for the first and only time.

Now or never!

He felt her arms around his neck, her body against his. No man could stand it. With a groan he clasped her to him and, as she closed her eyes, kissed her fiercely. His tears were salt on her cheeks. Had she got him or not?

"Nothing matters, sweetheart," she assured him, "so long as you love me! Nothing! Nothing in the world."

A footstep echoed in the hall outside and they broke apart. Rufus reached quickly for his cigar and was re-lighting it when Mr. Savoy appeared in the doorway.

"I just got an idea!" said the producer. "Tomorrow's Monday—an off night at the theatre. How about a run down to Atlantic City? I can always get accommodations, and if we started by half past ten we'd get down there shortly after midnight. Half a dozen of 'em in there are quite keen for it! If you want to stay over, you can wire the management from there to put in

your understudy. Ziggy'll do it in a minute for you!"

Rufus looked slowly at Mercedes. The hand that held the match shook perceptibly.

"I'm game for it," he answered after a moment's hesitation—"if Miss Delaval is!"

He was relieved when the party dwindled to the Savoy, another couple whom he had not known before, Mercedes, and himself, and he was glad—if a little surprised—that Fannin and that queer-looking girl of his were not going. A whiskey and soda and he was perfectly himself again—as he thought.

Savoy sent out for taxis, Mercedes went off to her apartment to pack, and Rufus telephoned to the Corner Store and engaged a landaulet. Then he returned home for the few things he would need over the holiday. He let himself in with his latch-key, although the servants were still up, and, having told the taxi-driver to wait, sneaked upstairs to his room, where he hurriedly threw some clean linen and toilet articles into a valise after fortifying himself with another drink from the decanter by his bed.

A half-hour later they were off, the two other couples leading the way in the Savoy's pearl-gray touring-car, Mercedes and himself following behind in the landaulet. It was exhilarating and romantic whirling down Broadway under the lights, and after they had crossed the river and increased their speed, Mercedes complained of the cold and he put his arm around her and held her tight with a certain exultation. And he had his flask.

He told himself that everything would work out—somehow; but as they jounced through the long hours he began to have greater doubts as to her innocence.

By the time they had reached Atlantic City under the sickly light of a gibbous moon he no longer had any. When at last they drew up in front of the dimly lit hotel he disentangled himself from her with a sense of abasement and lingered behind the group with averted face while they went to the desk to register. Only then did he realize to what an extent he was committed.

Thoroughly upset—frightened almost at what was in prospect—and with a choking sensation in his gullet—he debated signing a fictitious name. But the thought was repugnant to him and he realized that, anyhow, such an act would inevitably be misconstrued. He could not deny his visit when so many—including the chauffeur of the landaulet—knew of it. Better put on a bold face.

However, he would have avoided registering at all had not the clerk, disregarding his elaborate unconcern, called his attention to the omission. With a leaden arm and icy fingers he signed "R. Kayne, N. Y.," at the end of the procession in a cramped, unnatural handwriting. Then, as Savoy busied himself with the bell-hop, he said to the clerk in an undertone:

"Put the others together. You can tuck me in anywhere."

Emotionally exhausted, fatigued by his long ride in the freezing wind, it was nearly noon before he awoke in his room in the "Annex," after a heavy alcoholic sleep. At home his return to consciousness would have been greeted by tempered light falling through silken curtains, the soft crackle of a fire, the sound of a running bath, the sense of security that comes from familiar objects. Now he looked about him bewildered.

The sunlight was pouring through dirty uncurtained windows upon a warped floor of hard pine. He was

lying uncomfortably upon the sagging wire spring of a chipped white iron bed. The air was close and smelled of stale tobacco. His mouth was thick with carpet dust and a fine steel wire vibrated through his temples. The walls of plaster, once white perhaps, were cracked and scarred by trunk corners. A blowzy mirror stared at him from a badly stained bureau top, on which was a porcelain tray containing ashes and a cigar butt he could not remember putting there. A cuspidor stood upon a soiled strip of carpet at the foot of the bed and next it lay his open valise, the arms of an unfolded shirt sprawling from it in drunken fashion. His golf-cap hung nonchalantly upon a bed-post. He felt like a drummer after a spree! So this was the gay life!

He fumbled for his watch beneath the pillow—quarter past twelve. The others must have been up for hours—no, Mercedes never got up. Mercedes! He shuddered as he recalled their arrival of the night before. What was he, Rufus Kayne, doing at Atlantic City? It was horrible! He felt as if, having died, he had waked up in a strange hostelry en route to some place of torment. How could he have imagined for an instant that Mercedes was anything but what he now knew her to be? His cheeks burned as he remembered their tender talks over the telephone—their *billet-doux*—the bus-top philandering. And she was in the same hotel with him at that very moment. Suppose he should be seen with her—on the boardwalk or in the dining-room? How could he help being seen with her? How could he explain it?

In a flash he saw the scandal that would overwhelm the entire family. It would kill Elizabeth! Smash his feeble old father—who took such pride in him! Besmirch Diana, Claudia, Sheila. They could never live

it down. After all, he had pledged his oath to be faithful to his wife. Recollections of the teachings of his childhood, his half-belief in the prohibitions of his creed, every somnolent feeling of decency and loyalty, united with his instinct of self-preservation to emphasize the danger not only to himself but to those he was responsible for.

He must get out of it somehow before it was too late. Thank God, it was not too late! Better make a booby of himself than take a chance of being compromised or of doing something he would regret all his life. What did he care what these Broadway folk thought of him? Who were they, anyhow?

Like that of a cornered rat, his eye darted round the shabby room. There was a telephone on the wall by the door and he unhooked it and asked the operator the hour of departure of the next train for New York. One-ten! The bus left at twelve-fifty-five. He could make it—if he hurried. He telephoned for his bill and began to dress.

It would be easy enough to leave letters for Mercedes, Savoy, and the chauffeur explaining that he had overlooked an important dinner engagement and been obliged to return to New York. But he was sick of deceptions; and he did not like the idea of having in existence a letter on the hotel paper bearing his signature. He gave the money for his bill to the chief bell-hop, who brought it to his room, and without going to the office, descended in the elevator to the ground level, where the porter handed him his reservation. He handed the man five dollars, and instructed him to tell Miss Delaval that he had been unexpectedly obliged to return to the city and that he was placing his car at her disposal for the afternoon.

Half an hour later as the express scudded across the snow-covered fields he sat in the smoker feeling almost young. No one could catch him now!

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CALM

As the months passed and winter drew toward spring, a certain peace came into the soul of Rufus Kayne—the relief of him who, having plunged part way down the face of a precipice, has caught a finger-hold in a crevice and, after hanging perilously over the abyss, has managed to climb back and now lies panting but—for the moment—safe upon the edge. Something—if only a faint adumbration—of his earlier affection for Elizabeth had crept back into their intercourse and, although it may have, in fact, been only a greater toleration on his part for her limitations, she noticed it and it gratified her. Diana, too, was different, and often came into the library for a chat with her father—a hitherto almost unheard-of thing. But what gave the house itself an entirely new atmosphere was the presence of Claudia and her children.

Had anything further been necessary to awaken Rufus from his dream of romantic passion—to dispel his illusion of a vanished youth miraculously restored—it was the realization that he was a grandfather. Grandfathers, he perceived, did not do the things that he had had it in his mind to do. At any rate, one never heard of their doing them: any more than one heard of great-grandfathers doing unseemly things. The time to sow one's wild oats was in the spring—not when the snow was falling. No more Indian summer for him! Not even a crop of winter wheat! Tranquillity——!

Rufus had forgotten his years during his little flurry with Mercedes, thinking of himself as still a young man, or, at any rate, as possessed of an eternal middle age; but the presence of two babies in the house accentuated the unseemly character of the episode, and not a day, hardly an hour, went by that he did not thank his stars that he had slipped out from her clutches. He had not heard from her again after that night; and Mr. Savoy had remained utterly silent—quite naturally, Rufus acknowledged, after the shabby way in which he had abandoned them. He had to confess in fairness that, after all, the trip had been merely the outcome of Mr. Savoy's solicitude for his friend's success with the young actress.

Oh, well, the whole thing had been a mistake and he had had quite enough of these theatrical people. Thank Heaven, nobody in his circle called anybody else "dear" or "dearie" or "darling" or "sweetheart"—at least audibly—he could not have borne it. He was through with Broadway—had washed his hands of it forever. All he wanted now—after his abortive fling—was to get his wild oats back into the seed-bag.

While he felt somewhat chagrined at the discovery that he was already too old—at only fifty-five—for amorous romance, he told himself that this kind of success demanded sacrifices and that he must not expect to have his cake and eat it. The golf-course was more in his line than the boudoir.

Sometimes he would wake up in the night and shudder at the thought of what he had escaped, and once he dreamed that he was at Atlantic City—so vividly that he started up in a sweat and turned on the electric light in order to satisfy himself that he was not there but safe in his own pink, silk-covered bed.

Tranquillity—that was all he wanted. Nothing perturbing or hectic! He would take what he could get—respectably—and be content. The daily sight of Miss Dolan gave rise to unpleasant recollections and he transferred her to the trust department and secured a male stenographer. Shortly afterward he issued an order forbidding bobbed hair. He paid a great deal of attention to his father, the old pirate, and as the days grew warmer walked with him in the Park in the late afternoon, self-consciously aware of the benches where he had so often sat with Mercedes, their faces averted from the traffic.

He was shocked to find how fast the old man was aging. At times it almost seemed as if his mind wandered a little. A scandal would have finished him. On these occasions Rufus was doubly glad that he had acted as he had. Sometimes he would take his father with little Peter and Bess and spend a whole Sunday morning wandering around the Zoo and the Carousel, the starchy Spedding hovering disapprovingly in the offing.

A grandfather! And the pirate a great-grandfather! When to Rufus it only seemed yesterday that he had sat on the front steps of the Remsen Street house singing “Pierre de Bonton de Paree!” Yet that was forty years ago! During that forty years he had struggled, schemed, manœuvred, and worried to become what he was. As he sat in the Park watching his two grandchildren sprawling on the young grass he realized that the forty years had been wasted. All his father wanted was peace. All *he* wanted was peace. Funny! It was so little to want, so easy to get.

If only Diana would marry some nice chap; and Claudia could be made happier; and Sheila brought to her senses! Up to this time he had not realized that

his own happiness depended in any way upon the happiness of his children. Now he saw that it was all part and parcel of the same thing; just as the happiness of his father was. Dear old pirate! During these days not a shadow troubled his conscience. His heart was even light. The weed had died; something of the flower's fragrance lingered.

To Peter B. his great-grandchildren were an ecstasy. As a young man he had been too much occupied with business to take any particular interest in Rufus or James or Bridget. His railroad-busting had left him little time for domesticity. But now—in his old age—these two little people stirred in him a deep and wondering interest with which was combined a curious quality of understanding. He had never understood Diana or Claudia. Sheila had always bewildered him. And he had never wanted to understand any of his own children except Rufus.

Of late years it had seemed as though the world had been getting away from him. Everything had changed so since he was young—everything! People, houses, ships, the way you got about, what doctors did to you—no more kings—Barnum—Henry Ward Beecher—Artemus Ward—Jo Jefferson—Buffalo Bill, dead—the government taking all you had in taxes—Germany a republic—everything in a mess—this Jewish fellow Einstein upsetting the universe—these outlandish ideas about free love and “glands”—aeroplanes buzzing around everywhere—the way they could photograph your insides—that man Wells saying the world was twenty-five million years old—and women with short hair!

There was hardly anything that hadn't altered so as to be almost unrecognizable. Yet in this world of flux,

where, as the chap said, the only changeless thing was the law of change, where you never knew what crazy idea was going to be sprung on you and nothing was too preposterous to be a fact—cows being milked by electricity, for instance, and old ladies prancing around and smoking cigarettes—in this wabbling, rocking, jazzing universe where nothing seemed the same as when he was a boy, there was one thing that never changed—childhood. Constant, immutable, unvarying—the great permanent fact that told him that he was still “at home”! Children were exactly the same as they always had been. They would always be the same—even if the world lasted for twenty-five million years more.

Of course boys and girls were not the same—he should say not! But it made no difference whether children were white or black or yellow, whether their hair was straight, curled, or in pigtails, or whether they ate off gold or china or pine boards, or wore calico or ermine, a “g”-string or nothing at all, or whether their papas were emperors or millionaires or street-sweepers—all were exactly the same. They spoke the same language, they played the same games, the same things would make them smile. A sugar-plum was legal tender in the republic of childhood all over the world.

The pirate took an intense pleasure in this knowledge. If one understood this all-important fact, it gave one the key to a sort of masonic order to which all children belonged. Old Peter had the grip and all the passwords. He knew just the casual, matter-of-fact way one should speak to a child, in which pieces of string and glass, giants and dwarfs, lions and bears, policemen and nurses, milk-bottles, safety-pins, fairies, and bedtime are all equally important and coexisting facts.

Rufus had discovered him, shortly after Claudia's return, engaged in demonstrating this near the entrance of the Park, by throwing coppers to a group of temporarily deserted infants—clad in lace and ermine—who, under the impulse of a disgracefully plebeian possessive instinct, hurled themselves upon the ground with squeals of joy and fell furiously upon one another like so many little paupers. Therefore, since the pirate, little Peter, and baby Bess understood one another, they became great friends and spent most of their time together; and as this enabled Claudia to be more with Nigel, it gave the greater satisfaction all round.

For, in defiance of nature and probability, Lady Harrowdale had arrived home from her stormy voyage across the Atlantic strangely happy. From the first the whole adventure had partaken of the quality of a mediæval romance—he the valiant, the beautiful, the mystic knight, she the maiden in distress. She loved him as she had never loved, and he loved her passionately in return, with an attitude almost reverential. Rufus approved the attachment, for not only was Craig a fine fellow but it would solve the problem of Claudia's future. She could get a divorce. They could marry. He would set Nigel up in some high-class business connected with Wall Street, give Claudia a handsome allowance, and she would be as well off as if her first Englishman had not proved a scamp.

Diana, who hitherto had paid but scant attention to her sister except as a subject for cynical and satirical dissection, was well satisfied. She had viewed Claudia's marriage to Harrowdale with no favor but as none of her business, and so had held her tongue. Now her sister's escape from England under the protection of a man for whom she knew that Lloyd had the highest

respect, and the pending presumptive marriage of the hero and heroine of the adventure, surrounded Claudia for her with a glamour, which Maitland's connection with it intensified. For Diana no longer endeavored to conceal her growing regard for this youth so different in all his traditions and ideals from herself, whom fate had pitchforked into her life and who had become so much involved in their affairs.

Yet they had seen each other only a few times since the night at "The Revels." Diana had dashed off again almost immediately to join a party on Devereaux's house-boat in Florida, and, as she had stopped over at Jekyl Island and Hot Springs upon her return, had been away nearly six weeks. During that time Lloyd had heard nothing from her.

He was immersed now in the business of the trust company and spent many hours each week in the company of Rufus, who assigned him office room near his own in the Utopia's building. There had been some dissatisfaction with the company's new enterprises, and at Lloyd's suggestion a new corporation with larger charter powers had been formed to take over some of them. This had kept him very busy, but he had found time to dine at the Kaynes' several times, and once or twice had been included in theatre-parties given by her mother for Sheila, who now openly rated him to her family as "perfectly stunning" and a "terrible darling." Sheila, in fact, had been looking very well on the few occasions when he had passed an evening in her society, and her conversation, while no less voluble, seemed to him less hectic. She was certainly a nice kid. He tried, quite hopelessly, to banish Diana from his mind.

The discharge of Capper, the footman, who had sought him out, had upset and incensed him, but he

had stifled his resentment and kept his peace, making a place for the man at the Irving Place establishment as a half valet, half general servant to the various lodgers, who paid his wages between them.

Nigel had returned after his ten weeks' absence tanned and happy. It had been a regular lark, he said, and he had enjoyed every minute of it. His spirits were irrepressible, and his delight at finding Capper installed as their majordomo was unbounded. But he avoided mentioning Claudia to Lloyd, feeling that until she was made free from her husband by American law it was ill taste for him to disclose his attachment even to his roommate and friend.

And so to the guardian angel of sailors, drunken men, and lunatics, or whatever special providence was then watching over the house of Kayne, it may have seemed in the mad month of earliest spring that all was well, and indeed better than it ever had been; for Rufus had had his belated fling and no harm had come of it, Claudia with her two children had achieved a safe return, Sheila had been saved—snatched like a brand from the burning—and Diana had awakened to a strange new sense of responsibility.

All these things had come to pass without the public or any of their friends being any the wiser. To the world at large, from the "white wing" scraping the asphalt in front of the Cathedral to the Reverend Mr. Thrum, the Kaynes were still leading the identical lives which they had always led. The same motors rolled to the curb, the same footmen ran up the steps, Jarmon opened the front door just as usual, and the family came and went as if none of the events heretofore chronicled had taken place. Yet with the exception of Jarmon and Mrs. Kayne, and the two old men

living their detached and physically exalted existence upon the top story of the house, there was not one of them to whom the winter had not brought a vital change.

CHAPTER XIX

THE LAW TRAP

ON a morning about three weeks after Claudia's arrival in New York, Rufus appeared at the doorway of Maitland's office, which adjoined his own at the Utopia Trust Company. He looked, the younger man thought, fitter than he had seemed for some time, less puffy under the eyes, a better color, more on his toes.

"By the way," remarked the banker, "my daughter—Lady Harrowdale—is coming down this morning. Will it be convenient for you to see her?"

"Why, certainly!"

"I guess you know what she wants—and why she wants it?"

Maitland shook his head.

"No, but I'll be glad to help her in any way I can. Wouldn't it be better for her to see Mr. Pepperill?"

"Damn Pepperill!"

Rufus stepped over the threshold and in front of the lawyer's desk.

"Look here!" he said, "I don't mind telling you that I'm through with Pepperill—so far as my private affairs are concerned. Of course he's the attorney for the trust company and will continue to be so—nominally, at any rate—but I don't care for his manner. I'm sick of his patronizing airs. He's too infernally supercilious. He turned me over to you, anyhow. I don't want him—I do want you."

Lloyd was embarrassed. He was fully aware of his

partner's attitude toward the Kaynes, and for some unformulated reason he slightly resented it. They might be individually and collectively what Mr. Pepperill had said they were on that walk down Fifth Avenue the November before—he could even now remember exactly how the old lawyer had stigmatized each and every one of them—but he felt somehow that there was an element of unfairness—at least of prejudice—in his point of view. How much did the old gentleman really know about them, anyhow?

“So far as Lady Harrowdale is concerned, the matter is already in my hands,” he answered. “We can cross the other bridge when we come to it.”

Rufus nodded approval.

“Pepperill is getting old—crotchety!” he commented. “You’ve done a first-class job so far for Claudia. I hope you’ll manage to finish it up as well.”

“How are Miss Diana and Miss Sheila?” asked Lloyd.

“Both fit as fiddles!” answered their father. “Diana’s brown as a berry, and as for Sheila, she looks like a different girl altogether. You know she’s taken up this Yogi business—a lot of her friends have and it seems to be doing her a world of good.”

“Doctor Dhal, you mean?”

“I don’t know the man’s name. Very likely that’s it. Of course there’s a lot of bunk mixed in with it—they have a weird lingo—pretend they’re sitting cross-legged on lily-pads and all that sort of rot—but he gives them exercises that certainly do wonders.”

“I don’t care much for Doctor Dhal,” said Maitland, recalling vividly the evening at Diana’s studio.

“I guess he can’t do them any harm. Well, look out the best you can for Claudia!”

Rufus turned and walked toward his own room, leaving Maitland alone. So Diana was back again, was she? And brown as a nut! The little pagan! Across the underwriting agreement lying before him floated a dim mist, and through it he heard the laughter of running water, saw nymphs dancing among tree-trunks, caught the gleam of white marble and the odor of moss and dead leaves.

He pushed back his chair and went to the window. Across the crater formed by the tops of the great buildings he could see the deep blue of the harbor glinting in the sunlight—like Diana's eyes. The marble shafts rose about him like the columns of Grecian temples—the white steam—like clouds of incense. Her temple—he the worshipper! The world was full of light—sparkling—joyous! White arms held themselves out to him. He breathed deeply—tremulously. A wonderful world—golden, like Diana.

The voice of the uniformed attendant interrupted him.

“Lady Harrowdale to see you, sir.”

A slight figure was framed in the doorway. He had never seen her before and he was startled at the contrast between her appearance and that of Diana. Claudia, in deference to her complexion, had always affected dark colors.

“Lady Harrowdale? Come in.”

They shook hands and he offered her a chair.

“I suppose father told you to expect me?”

Her tone was both wistful and apprehensive.

“Oh, yes! You know I've had charge of your affairs for some time,” he answered for her encouragement.

She lowered her eyes, finding it difficult to go on.

“I want you to get me a divorce,” she said finally.

He frowned. So far as he had been concerned the idea of a divorce had not entered into the original scheme. It was because she could not get a divorce in the country of her legal residence that he had urged her escape from England—and from her husband. Why hadn't her father spoken to him and saved her the embarrassment of an interview with a lawyer?

"But, Lady Harrowdale!" he protested. "Did not Nigel—Mr. Craig—explain to you that your leaving England with your children was in lieu of a divorce? that it was owing to the fact that the English courts would not grant you one that we decided to have you take the matter into your own hands?"

"No," she said, without looking up. "He didn't tell me. I don't think he knew. I am quite sure he did not know," she added, with a rising color.

Lloyd was distressed. Was it possible that he had never discussed that phase of the situation with his friend? He was forced to admit that it was; and that his own emphasis had always been upon the purely adventurous aspect of the affair.

"I am sorry to say that you cannot get a divorce in this country which will be good in England, Lady Harrowdale," he announced in a tone of sympathy.

Her color melted away.

"I don't understand."

"It's quite simple—as a legal proposition. In a word, and as applicable to your own case, the English courts would refuse to recognize a decree of divorce secured outside their jurisdiction by the wife of a British subject domiciled and resident in England. The fact that you were married to him in this country would be viewed as immaterial. Your husband being an Englishman, his marriage is regarded by the English courts as an

English marriage, to be dissolved only by English law. You had not the legal grounds for a divorce in England and for that reason were helpless. No decree obtained here would avail you there. In England you would still be Harrowdale's wife."

She looked at him, incredulous.

"Oh, that can't be the law!" she exclaimed. "How terrible!"

"Yes," he admitted. "The English law does seem rather cruel."

"And if I went ahead just the same and got an American divorce—?" She hesitated.

"If you should marry again, your English husband could divorce you under English law on—the only ground they recognize."

He let her have it. There was no use mincing matters. She winced, and flushed again to her hair.

"Oh! But what can I do!" she cried helplessly. Maitland was very sorry for her.

"Of course," he answered, "you could get a divorce in some State like Maine or Nevada on the ground of abandonment. That would not be difficult. You would simply have to take up a residence there for the required statutory period and allege that your husband had deserted you. Hundreds—perhaps thousands—of such decrees are handed down every year. But unless your husband actually appeared in person or by attorney in the case, the decree would have only a limited operation. You would be married in some States and not married in others—and you would still, as I said, be Harrowdale's wife under the law of England."

"How unjust!"

She clenched her fists, then looked at him appealingly.

"Oh, please help me! Isn't there some way of my get-

ting a divorce that will be good in England? Can't my marriage be annulled or something? I was so young—and so frightfully ignorant! Nobody told me anything! Harrowdale has never contributed a cent to my support or to that of my children. He's been openly unfaithful to me and publicly joked about it! What sort of justice is it that keeps me bound to him?"

"English!" answered Lloyd grimly. "There are, no doubt, hundreds of American women in precisely your position."

"Oh, what shall I do!" she begged of him, wringing her hands. "What shall I do!"

He would have given much to be able to tell her that it made no matter what she did so long as she was happy—but he could not. Yet to him it seemed that here was of the law's iniquities the wickedest of all. A beautiful young woman—on the threshold of life—shackled by an archaic system to a confessedly unfaithful husband because she could not prove what the English statutes called "cruelty"—whereas, had she on her part been once unfaithful to him, the same courts would have granted him instant relief. That the poor child was Diana's sister made it all the worse for him. She was like a drooping flower thirsting for air and moisture. Could he crush her to the ground under the heavy heel of legal ethics?

"I don't know," he began, "whether or not you want my personal opinion of what you should do."

"Oh, yes! Yes!" she cried eagerly. "That's exactly what I do want."

"Then," he said gently, "I should let it be enough that I no longer was compelled to live with my husband. An American divorce would not improve your position, and there would be unpleasant publicity and a certain

amount of legal hocus-pocus connected with getting it. You would have to base your claim on an alleged desertion by your husband, whereas in fact, if not strictly in law, you have deserted him, by running away from England. Your status would always be ambiguous—a sort of 'grass-widowhood.' You don't want to become a member of any widely advertised divorce colony?"

He spoke a shade ironically to try her out.

"—Particularly if you don't want to marry again."

She bowed her head on the desk.

"Even if you did, my advice would be all the stronger. For in that case your own church would not recognize your second marriage after a decree granted merely on the ground of abandonment. Harrowdale could drag your name through the divorce courts in England and get judgment against you just as if you had never been freed from him here. Even if you were prepared to face that—live it down yourself—it would be pretty tough on your children to have for a mother a woman who had been held—even in a foreign court—to be living illegally with the man who called himself her husband. Luckily, though, we don't have to go into that. You really wouldn't accomplish anything by getting an American divorce and you don't need one."

"But—but—I do!" she confessed. "I never knew! I thought that of course—I—could get free! Who could have imagined that there were such horrible laws—so heartless—utterly unfair? And now—now there's not only myself and the children to consider; there's—there's"—she raised her face streaked with tears to his—"Nigel!"

"Nigel?" he cried. "Craig?"

The surprise of it lashed his face like a whip. Nigel! Out of the frying-pan into the fire. After all it was

natural enough. He could not blame her for falling in love with the boy, or Nigel—anybody, for that matter—for falling in love with her. Why had not Nigel given him some inkling of the situation? A hypersensitive delicacy probably. He got up and walked to the window again, as if to find in the swirling smoke-wreaths some answer to his riddle.

There was a light footfall outside the door. Diana, in a buff sport suit and blue muffler capped by an ochre tam, stood upon the threshold glancing quizzically from one to the other.

“Hello, Claudia!—Whose funeral is this?” she asked in the low, husky voice that to Lloyd was sweeter than the bells of Shannon. “What are you and Mr. Savonarola weeping about? Is there room for another mourner?”

Then she rested her hand on her sister’s shoulder.

“I’m sorry!” she said. “I didn’t mean to be rotten. But what has happened?”

Claudia pressed Diana’s hand against her cheek.

“It’s—it’s *my* funeral!” she answered.

Diana turned quickly to Lloyd. All her jocularities had vanished.

“What’s the trouble? Can’t Claudia get a divorce?”

Maitland made a helpless gesture.

“Not one that would be recognized in England—and Craig is an Englishman. If she married him here, Harrowdale could divorce her in London. Besides, no clergyman of her own church would marry her. Her position would be ambiguous and intolerable. She would be married to one man in one place and to another man in another; Nigel’s legal wife in New York and Nevada—and a bigamist in England. Think of her children!”

Diana’s eyes glinted.

"Is that the law?" she demanded.

"Unquestionably."

"Then," she cried, "I would let the law go to the devil! Who cares whether her divorce is good in England or Siam or Patagonia? She's never going to live there. If she marries the man she loves, what difference does it make to her what Harrowdale can do under English law? Let him divorce her if he wants to! As many times as he chooses! How can you stand there and calmly interpose these technical objections? They love each other, don't they? Under the laws of the United States a way can be found for them to marry? You're speaking merely as a lawyer! Why don't you talk like a human being? If I loved a man, I'd go to him law or no law—marriage or no marriage!"

"Oh, Diana!" expostulated Claudia.

"Perhaps you would!" retorted Lloyd. "But you are not my client. It is my duty to advise your sister as to the law and the practical consequences in the event of her taking such a step."

"But who can tell what the 'consequences'—as you call them—would be?" she asked. "We all know plenty of women who have gone out to Nevada and got divorces and nobody thinks any the less of them. As for your preposterous clergyman—! Who cares whether he is married by a priest or a rabbi or an alderman? Personally I'd prefer a justice of the peace—as simpler and cheaper. The world looks deeper than that if it looks at all, which it usually doesn't. Nowadays people regard this kind of thing as none of their business. After all—is it?"

"The world has progressed a long way since these old laws were invented," she continued indignantly. "Such laws ought to be scrapped—and they will be. As for the church, am I going to let my sister suffer all her life

because some idiot like Mr. Thrum isn't willing to read the marriage service over her? Did you ever hear him say grace? Do you suppose Thrum ever sanctified anything? If Claudia wants to marry Nigel Craig, let her get any sort of a divorce she can—and marry him—any way she wants!”

She turned and placed her arm protectingly about her sister.

“Come along, dear!” she said. “After all, you're free, white, and twenty-one. I've no patience with these old-fashioned theories that sacrifice the spirit to the letter and the heart to the conscience!”

“Shall we ask your father's opinion?” suggested Lloyd.

Diana threw back her head, and a beam of sunlight from the high window played through her hair.

“What has he got to do with it? Do you suppose that I would let his opinion influence Claudia one way or another? What's the use pretending? Whose fault is it that she's in this mess? If my father had been on his job—or if I had been, for that matter—Claudia would never have been allowed to marry a bounder like that! Of course dad realizes his mistake now. How could he help it? But he has forfeited his right to be considered. His judgment isn't what it should be. He's lost his point of view. He can't put the right values on things. Let's leave dad out of it!”

A smile fluttered over her lips.

“Well, Mr. Savonarola?”

Claudia looked up at her proudly. Diana's words had inspired her with hope. After all, Lloyd asked himself, wasn't he playing a rather pusillanimous part? Suppose instead of Claudia and Harrowdale it were Diana and himself? Would he hesitate to marry her?

“Oh, you wonderful girl!” he thought, hardly able

to resist an impulse to kiss her hair just where the sunbeam turned it to gold. "You marvellous, wonderful girl!"

But he realized that he must not let his inclination influence his judgment. Even if one could cast off the shackles of conscience, disregard the doctrines of one's church, one could not defy society. There it stood like a policeman with his club. And he knew that it had a way of using it.

"I wish I could say that I agree with you," he replied, knowing that he was inviting her scorn. "But I don't. These archaic ideas, as you call them, are based on pretty fundamental principles. What you say about going to a man if you loved him, and all that, is the way they write in novels. But it doesn't work out in practice, and not always in the novels either. All I say is that Lady Harrowdale should consider carefully before she decides to take so vital a step."

"I shan't call you 'Mr. Savonarola' any longer!" retorted Diana. "Didn't some one say that the boy who wasn't willing to take a chance was already an old man? After this, I think I shall call you 'Mr. Methuselah'! Come along, Claudia! We might as well go up and ask Mr. Thrum what he thinks about it."

Claudia held out her hand to him.

"Don't mind Di! This has been very upsetting to both of us. I'm all confused. I don't know what to do. But thank you very much for your advice. I'm sure it's excellent!"

Lloyd shook hands, first with her and then with Diana. The wicked young creature gave him a sphinx-like smile.

"It's the advice of a very good young man!" she said.

CHAPTER XX

" DICTUM "

LLOYD found difficulty in concentrating his thoughts upon the trust company's affairs during the rest of the day. He felt that he had been placed in a false position by Diana; her sarcasm had wounded him. After all, he had not attempted to dictate to Claudia. He had merely advised her as a lawyer. Given her sound—even, one might say, worldly—advice.

Yet he was worried. He knew that he had made a poor show of himself before Diana. Might she not be right in what she had said about sacrificing the spirit to the letter and the heart to the conscience? What authority had he to presume to tell any other human being what he or she ought or ought not to do? *Was* he, as she had hinted, an old man who wasn't willing to take a chance? He admitted that there might be something in the indictment. Hadn't he perhaps confused law with morality? Wasn't there, really, something higher than law? And of this could anybody be the judge except the individual himself? You could hardly expect a lawyer to take the stand that the law might go to the devil. Only a breezy young sports-woman like Diana could have the nerve to do that! Yet she had made him feel hidebound, dry as dust! He wondered if he were overburdened with conscience just as some people were overburdened with money. He did not like being called "Mr. Savonarola" or "Mr. Methuselah" either! Nobody else seemed to take that

view of him. He always got on well with other men, knew himself to be generally popular at his clubs—the Players, for instance.

He liked the Players, for it was cheap, it was convenient—his quarters were just around the corner, and, while the members were a heterogeneous lot, their very diversity was entertaining, and almost all of them earned their living by being interested in what was going on in the world. At the Players you could always find some chap, in the smoking-room or downstairs watching the billiard-players, who had just come back from Tahiti or Moscow, or had been interviewing Lloyd George, or was going to write a book that he profoundly believed would revolutionize society. One of these last, old Peter Parradym, was even then standing on the landing smoking a small, black pipe as Lloyd entered the club, where he had gone to look for Nigel.

“Hello, Maitland,” nodded the author, whose whimsical face belied the acidity of his style. “Looking for anybody?”

“Haven’t seen Nigel Craig, have you?”

“Yes, he’s around here somewhere,” answered Parradym. “Are you going to be in New York for a while?”

“I merely live here,” Maitland informed him. “What are you up to?”

Parradym came slowly downstairs.

“My usual stunt—a novel. Horribly ungrateful work. By the time you’ve written it and got it published, nobody cares what you’ve been writing about. It’s all over, including the shouting.”

“Well, what *are* you writing about?” asked Lloyd. “Why not select a topic of permanent interest?”

“There isn’t any!” replied the author mournfully refilling his pipe. “When I began my book everybody was

terribly excited over the demoralization of the young—this ‘flapper’ stuff. By the time I get it done and out in covers, they’ll all be wailing about the depravity of the old! In fact I think they’ve begun already!”

Maitland laughed sympathetically.

“Then you must cover them both!”

“That’s what I’m trying to do,” plaintively answered Parradym. “I’m doing a novel of three generations of the New York of to-day. It’s interesting work, very, notwithstanding that nobody ever believes what you say, even though it’s true. They’re right, in a way; mere facts don’t constitute truth, any more than a nose, eyes, and teeth make a face. I know my facts—they’re pretty bad—and hard to believe, some of ’em, but the inference to be drawn from them is another matter. It would take a wiser chap than I am to say what we’re coming to; whether this so-called revolt upon the part of the young is in the end going to make life saner or plunge us permanently into sensuality. Just now we’re getting the sensuality.”

“You mean that seriously?” challenged Lloyd.

Parradym stared at him.

“Do I mean it? Dear boy, I know it!”

“Maybe it’s merely superficial!” remarked Lloyd reminiscently. “Doesn’t mean anything. ‘They’re just silly kids.’”

The writer grunted.

“Superficial? Not much! There’s a distinct swing everywhere toward sexual laxity. Not merely among the smart folk—but among the people whom we have always regarded as being the back-bone of society. Just listen the next time you go out to dinner and compare what you hear with what you heard ten years ago.

“The girls discuss subjects that their mothers would

have died rather than mention. It wasn't out of prudishness, either! It was a natural instinct of self-preservation!

"Frankly, I'm a reactionary on this sex stuff. There's a lot of so-called morality that is merely lack of opportunity. Why supply it? We're all naturally curious to find things out first-hand—particularly those which are forbidden. Shove them under our noses and, well—you can't blame people much if they yield to temptation. There wouldn't be much difference of opinion about a father who took his son into a bar-room and ordered a Scotch high-ball, showed it to him and said that it was a great drink, but that, while he might smell it, he mustn't touch it! You'd classify the old man right with the morons, wouldn't you?"

Maitland smiled acquiescence.

"Well, son! You can draw the analogy as well as I can. The subject's personally distasteful to me, but I can't stand all this rot that otherwise sensible people are getting off about what is as plain as the nose on one's face. At the best a girl can't be pawed without having some of the bloom—or, at any rate, the powder—rubbed off!"

"I quite agree!" said his listener drily.

"It's a mighty subtle and insidious poison," went on Parradym. "And it's everywhere—disguised under the most innocent appearances. Look at this 'Doctor Dhal,' as he calls himself."

"Who?" demanded Maitland quickly.

"Why, 'Dhal Shastri'—the fellow who runs the Butterfly Club and has half the fashionable women in New York following him around and contributing to his support. You know what's really at the bottom of it! His clients don't, of course—in the earlier stages any-

how. They hear how wonderful his exercises are, and they go to one of his places and do a little hard work for the first time in their lives—and naturally they feel fine—think they’ve been rejuvenated. Well, perhaps a lot of ’em are. Then his assistants pick out the easy marks and flatter them by saying that they are among the rare few qualified to understand the mysteries of the weird religion which the great Doctor Dhal teaches. They fall for it and go down there. That is where Dhal gets in his insidious work. Through their natural curiosity stimulated by a peculiar physical attraction of his own—something like Rasputin’s, I fancy—Dhal gradually gets them deeper and deeper under his influence, until they half believe in him, are half in love with him, and are wholly afraid of him. An extraordinary phenomenon!”

“But isn’t this known?” protested Maitland.

“He’s been shown up in the newspapers time after time!” answered Parradym. “Indicted here and in other States, but never convicted. Jerome, Whitman—all the district attorneys knew about him and had his number. He’s not a Yogi—he was a professional bicycle-rider before he became the menace to society that he is to-day.”

Maitland could hardly credit it. Yet he had himself been witness to the influence which the man had seemed to exert over Mrs. Wingate and her friend. If, as Kayne had said, Sheila had taken up with him, the connection must be broken up in short order.

“But are all his followers necessarily victims?” he asked.

“By no means!” returned the novelist. “That’s where he’s so clever. Plenty of men and women go down to his place and never suspect what goes on be-

hind the scenes. All they see is a lot of other respectable-looking people like themselves who indulge in games which are rather fantastic, to be sure, but which in themselves are harmless enough. They cook and sweep and make beds and play basket-ball and dance around in tights—'Annettes,' I believe they're called—and they really enjoy it. Swear by the old boy! It's only the ones with a natural predilection for the rites that are practised in secret who are 'initiated' into the inner circle. After all, I suppose what occurs there occasionally is no worse than what goes on in many of the hotels at Atlantic City most of the time. But that is only one manifestation of what I'm talking about. What do you think of conditions yourself? You probably go around a bit. You're an 'available.' How does the jazz age strike you?"

"As pretty rotten," answered Lloyd tersely.

"Well, so it does me!" ejaculated Parradym. "And I don't think it's entirely the fault of the young either. No doubt the whole business will right itself, but in the meantime there's going to be a lot of unhappiness. I like boys and girls. Haven't any of my own or maybe I wouldn't. Want to give 'em a fair deal. They're bully, most of 'em, especially the boys. It's natural for them to want happiness—just as we all do—and to mistake pleasure for it—just as we do. We're all living at high speed—all imagine that the more things we crowd into a day the more we get out of it. Rot, of course. Can't blame the kids for thinking the same thing. They speed it up—and we speed it up for them. They're not really interested or even amused; they're only excited."

"I should say," assented Lloyd, sitting down on the arm of the nearest chair and taking out his cigarette-

case, “that most of the people here in New York were trying so hard to have a good time that they overloaded themselves with pleasure and got spiritual indigestion!”

“Exactly!” agreed Parradym in turn. “But that doesn’t explain the new attitude of the young people toward their parents and toward life since the war. And they’ve got one!

“You can understand it on the part of the boys. We sent a million of them over for cannon-fodder, to make the world safe for ‘business as usual,’ and the ones that came back are wiser than when they went. They know now that with all our hurrah over them at the time, we were mighty glad we were over military age. It’s made them pretty cynical. They’re right in thinking that the world owes them something. I don’t mind telling you that the world owes them a lot.”

Maitland made no reply.

“They’ve had a great disillusionment,” continued Parradym seriously. “They’ve had a chance to see the difference between what mankind pretends to be and what it really is. You can’t fool them any longer with noble sentiments and high principles. They don’t regard girls as angels any longer. Anyhow, they look ’em straight in the eye and call spades spades. No more humbug for them.

“And the girls have naturally been affected by the same spirit. In a word, the war has knocked all the old Victorian ideas sky high. You can’t put anything over on the modern child. Bunk doesn’t go any longer. The children are ‘wise,’ and for the time being it hasn’t made them attractive.

“Discounting all the false impressions created by the girls who try to advertise themselves and win popularity

by pretending to be vamps, or who merely try to shock for the love of shocking, as a lot of them do, the girls to-day have lost something that they can't afford to be without. They're a lot faster than they ever thought of being before—a little tough. They're allowed to do and say things that a girl would have been dropped for ten years ago. In a word, they're too sophisticated. They like being manhandled and they've no manners!"

"Isn't the whole world the same way?" inquired Lloyd.

"That is what I'm coming to!" answered Parradym. "It is! The whole world is in revolt against the old hypocrisies—religious, political, and social. The children are sharing in it, and motors and movies, jazz music, feminism and woman suffrage, are all helping. We've discarded the old sanctimonious, straight-laced theology that pretended to believe in Gladstone's 'Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture,' when, in reality, its real doctrine was that 'what a man don't know can't hurt him'; but we've got nothing in its place.

"People go around growling about children having no reverence any longer—when they haven't any themselves! 'Honor thy father and thy mother'?—Good Lord! How on earth can they, with their mothers cutting up the way they do, dancing, and drinking and gambling, and having 'emotional friendships' with boys half their age?

"When you come right down to it, it's a tribute to human nature that the children are not worse than they are. Most of the girls, in spite of their gabble, are surprisingly innocent. It's my opinion that the young folks are objectionable less for what they are than for what they are not; and that, whatever they are or are not, they are exactly what they have been brought

up to be, what you'd expect from knowing their fathers and mothers and the homes they've come from.

"On the one hand, you've got a lot of silly women who ruin their children by spoiling them; and on the other you've got a lot who are so much interested in having a good time themselves that they pay no attention to them at all. In neither case is it fair to blame the kids. They've never had a chance to learn anything; never have been made to do anything worth while.

"The reason the boys, as a whole, are nicer than the girls is that the majority of them have been educated at boarding-schools, away from their parents. Hotels and apartments are poor substitutes for houses. And even houses don't have to be homes. There's no sense of permanence; of being a part of the social organism and accountable to it. You can hire a social secretary to 'bring out' your daughter for you, but you can't hire a woman to be a mother to her and expect to build up moral character at so much per month. Our young people go out into society without having the faintest idea that there is such a thing as a world of retribution and punishment.

"And there you are! Why don't the parents have the proper sense of duty? It's because they've got their minds fixed on cocktails and Texas Oil, golf, bridge, Palm Beach and the Rue de la Paix. It's because they spend their lives trying to avoid responsibility, by refusing to perform the simplest obligations of parenthood or citizenship. In a word, it's because they live 'by bread alone'!"

"That's pretty good stuff, Parry!" declared Lloyd. "Right out of the galleys, eh?"

"Yes," confessed the novelist, "it's all in my blasted

book—only, of course, not in such tabloid form. I started out, you see, to paint a cross-section of the period—of my own little—I should say, microscopic—environment. Well, naturally, the most obvious fact about our post-war society is that it's in a transitional stage. We'd got rid long ago of our brownstone Victorianism—America, you know, was twice as Victorian as England ever thought of being—we'd got rid rather of its false modesty and conventionality and timidity and worn-out dogma. Then the war came and a lot of us were optimistic enough to believe that a new nation would arise baptized in blood; that that awful crucifixion of youth was going to save the world; that the lesson of suffering and self-sacrifice would change a materialistic age into one of spiritual beauty.

“It was a bad guess! Victorian materialism—like the Victorian generation itself—still survives, twice as materialistic as before—twice as crass, twice as ostentatious—but for that reason, by George, I'll admit—only half as dangerous. To that extent there's hope, anyway! It was the old-fashioned respectable materialism that was rotting away our roots, destroying our possibility of salvation—the materialism of the heavy Sunday dinner and the Easter bonnet. To-day a bounder who has made a dozen millions during the war out of an abandoned rubber plantation can join the mob of greasy profiteers and force an admittance to what is known as society, imposing upon it his own standards of morals and manners; whereas in the old days he used to come crawling on his knees with his hat in his hand. To-day he's in the majority. The Victorians are being driven to the wall! Yes, my boy, the materialist of the moment is right on top, but, by gad, we all know the sort of materialist he is! And we all say, even

while we drink his bootlegged whiskey and jazz around to his nigger band, 'Poor devil!' or 'Poor ass!'—when twenty years ago we were saying that he was a clever fellow and not really as bad as he seemed. Well, son, that's some comfort! We've got our eyes open.

"If we're on the way to perdition, we know it—and we don't mistake it for the road to paradise. I tell you the war pulled the cork out of the bottle of life and it's fizzing to beat all, but pretty soon it will settle down—become 'still'!"

"Yes," retorted Lloyd—"and flat."

"If truth is flat, yes!" retorted Parradym. "At any rate, no longer charged with the old false hopes, superstitions, and hypocrisies. But we've got to have something instead of what has escaped. It's not going to be enough for us to know that we were wrong; we've got to know how to be right. We've got to have a religion—something to take the place of what we've discarded. We'll find it! It'll take time—and money—but we shall find it—or our children's children will!"

Parradym took up an illustrated weekly.

"Sorry to have bored you with all this. I know it's old stuff to you. I guess it is, anyway, and that my poor old novel will be 'way behind the times. I see bobbed hair is going out and that skirts are coming down. Well, glad to have caught a glimpse of you. Why not dine here some night with me?"

It was on the tip of Maitland's tongue to suggest that they should do so then. But at that instant he saw Nigel coming down the stairs guiding himself by the hand-rail. The boy did not look well, and there was an uncertainty in his movements not characteristic of him.

"Hello, Nigel!" Lloyd called to him. "I've been looking for you. Where have you been?"

"Upstairs in the front room," answered the other, with a smile.

"What doing? Reading?"

Nigel reached the bottom step and held out his hand.

"No, no. Just sitting around."

"I want to talk to you," said Maitland. "Come into the front room."

"What are you going to do?" queried Nigel. "Disclose the fact to me that I have inherited an earldom?"

"Not much like that! Have a cigarette?"

They threw themselves upon a heavily stuffed lounge before the fire. "Now for it!" thought Lloyd.

"I had a visit from Lady Harrowdale to-day," said he. Nigel turned to him eagerly.

"Did you? She told you?"

Lloyd laid his hand on his friend's knee.

"Yes, old man. I congratulate you. She is a charming woman."

"Will it take long for her to get a divorce?"

"No time at all," answered Lloyd. "But she can never get a divorce here which will be recognized in England. If she remarried here, Harrowdale could divorce her there upon the usual statutory ground."

He could hear Nigel swallow once—twice—a dry click. Then a high strained voice beside him said:

"Can't she get a divorce in England, then?"

"No," replied Maitland; "the English law requires both adultery and also what it calls 'cruelty'; she cannot technically establish that."

There was a long silence, during which he finished his cigarette and lighted another. Nigel did not speak.

"But," added Lloyd at length, "she could get a divorce here that would make your marriage legal in America. I suppose you'll always live here. It would make little practical difference."

"You forget," said Nigel, "I'm an Englishman. If we marry, she'll be an Englishwoman—!" He covered his face with his hands. "There's luck for you!"

He arose weakly and walked to the window, a taut figure against the twilight. The crack and hiss of the soft coal in the grate was the only sound breaking the silence.

Again Maitland saw himself an ungallant figure, forcing an artificial morality upon others at the cost of everything that made life worth living for them. Diana's appeal to the heart rather than to the conscience had conquered him. He now wanted Nigel to send the whole tangle to the devil just as she had. He was satisfied that the lad would be a fool to sacrifice Claudia for any consideration whatever. And, of course, he wouldn't; no boy of that age was going to let a technicality stand in his way!

Then Maitland saw Nigel's narrow shoulders square themselves.

"I couldn't let any woman I loved put herself in that position—for me! I couldn't! Let's go on over to the rooms!" he said, sliding his arm along the back of the sofa until it reached Lloyd's shoulder and circled it.

They went down to the coat-room together, Nigel holding Lloyd's arm, got their hats and passed out into the street. It was quite dark—a purple darkness ringed with pale gold about the street-lamps, blue where the scattered windows beyond the trees stencilled it with yellow squares. There was a dusty fragrance in the air; a hardly perceptible whiff of gasolene, as if the trees had been cleaned with it. The roar of the street-cars was muffled; but the diapason of the city vibrated above, on every side, beneath their feet.

"You know, Lloyd, somehow this always makes me think of Bryanstone Square, although it isn't the least

bit like it!" said Nigel. "I suppose an Englishman sees England everywhere he looks.

"There's another thing, too! I don't suppose you can appreciate exactly what it means to be English," he went on apologetically after a moment. "An Englishman has the same feeling about England as a family of boys and girls have about their mother—a terribly wise old woman to whom they owe everything—everything. A chap may be an awful bounder, but if anybody speaks a word against his mother—you know what I mean! And down in his insides the only thing he really cares about is her approval or disapproval.

"She may be all wrong—what she tells you to do may seem perfect rot—but, although you may grouse a bit, you always do it—you can't help yourself. You've got to be loyal to the family, you know. Do you get the idea? The law may be old-fashioned—just as your mother may be old-fashioned—but, after all, she's your mother." He was silent until they had almost reached the front steps of their house. Then he said: "I couldn't let any woman do that—throw herself away—for me. But even if I were that much of a rotter, if I disregarded the law of my country, I should feel I wasn't playing the game."

Their feet made a hard clumping on the uncarpeted wooden stairs. Lloyd unlocked the door and turned on the lights. Capper's head had been troubling him of late and the room had not been put in order.

"I'm going out to dinner," said Lloyd. "What are you going to do?"

Nigel had taken his customary stand in front of the fire with his arms behind his back.

"Stay here and fight this out!"

Lloyd crossed to his room and began dressing. What

Nigel had said had unsettled his mind more than ever—put him back just where he was before, nearly. But one thing was quite clear to him. He perceived that the Craig morality was of a higher order than the Pepperill morality, even if they both arrived at the same end. With his knowledge of Nigel's quality he should have known beforehand that the boy would never consent to put Claudia in the position of being his mistress under English law. As he re-entered the sitting-room, Nigel was still standing before the mantelpiece, shading his eyes with his hand. He looked hardly twenty!

"Good luck to you!" he said. "Good night!"

"Oh, I'll be back before eleven," answered Lloyd, putting on his hat.

"Well, good night, anyhow!" repeated Nigel, dropping his hand without looking at him.

The door closed, leaving Nigel alone. For a moment he stood listening intently as the footsteps on the stairs grew fainter, followed by the bang of the front door. An expression of bewilderment and of dread settled upon his face as he passed his hand slowly from left to right through the air. Then, as if dissatisfied with the result, he reached out and touched the centre-table.

Below, the door banged again and somebody came running up the stairs and turned the knob. Instantly Nigel straightened himself and assumed his customary smile.

"Back again so soon, Lloyd? Forgotten something?"

He looked straight at the doorway, and at that moment his gray eyes had all the beauty of his mother's. For perhaps a quarter of a minute there was silence. Then the man who had entered said in a puzzled tone:

"But it isn't Colonel Maitland, sir. It's me—Capper!"

Craig turned and rested his hands upon the edge of the mantelpiece.

"It's got me!" he said quietly. "Well, Capper, I'm done for! They said it was an even break, but luck went against me. No doubt in time I'll manage to muddle along well enough.—Light me a cigarette, will you, Capper?—Yes, I've got it!—Thanks!—I want you to pack my kit-bag and get me out of here to-night. No use being a millstone on your friends, eh? We'll find a place where they won't look for me—until I can make a plan——"

He felt for the armchair and lowered himself slowly into it.

"As long as I can smoke!—I thought they said the blind didn't enjoy it!—Yes, the old kit's back of the bed—where I chucked it when I came off the schooner.—I haven't got much stuff to take. Leave everything I don't need. I'll send for it—maybe. Better telephone for a taxi now, Capper; they take so long coming——"

"Give me that package of fags, will you, before you go into the other room?"

CHAPTER XXI

THE STORM

"MR. KAYNE," said old Brackmar, the chief loan clerk, one morning in late April, coming into the president's office with a newspaper in his hand, "I suppose, sir, you've seen this?"

"What is it?" carelessly asked Rufus.

"The Alpha-Omega Pictures Company have gone into voluntary bankruptcy. We have a million of their notes, you remember. In fact, I believe, sir, you personally guaranteed the loan."

Rufus experienced a queer, buzzing sensation in the pit of his stomach.

"That's bad!" he answered, catching his breath. The news resurrected the corpse of the whole unfortunate episode. Mercedes's ghost floated before him. Somehow the integrity of the loan did not appear quite the same now as then. He should have taken Pepperill's advice.

"They put their liabilities at nine million and their assets at two hundred and fifty thousand," added Brackmar in a distressed tone. "We're at the top of the list."

"The deuce we are!"

"The indorsements may be good, but——"

"Good!" snapped Kayne. "Of course they're good! Stein and Savoy are worth several millions between them."

"But they're creditors themselves."

"For how much?"

"A million and a half!"

The root of Kayne's tongue seemed to fill his throat. Suppose for any reason Stein and Savoy could not pay? They were in all sorts of things—crazy enterprises of every kind that people ordinarily would not know about—judgment-proof, doubtless! A million cash! If they defaulted he would at present prices be practically ruined! Perspiration beaded his brow with a fillet of tiny seed-pearls. He must have been crazy to go on those notes—particularly when he had had no need to do so. But he had been crazy—there was no other word for the whole miserable business. He had seen his lost youth beckoning to him and had rushed hysterically, blindly, after her.

"God!" he muttered, staring around the room after Brackmar had gone out. "This is bad!"

The papers would say things.

Fourteen of the eighteen directors of the Utopia Trust Company had lunch together in an upper chamber of the Down Town Association the following Friday noon at the invitation of Mr. Phillips, the chairman of the board. It had been felt that it would be wiser to discuss the Alpha-Omega's failure and the Utopia's connection with it in the first instance informally rather than in the quasi-publicity of a directors' meeting. It would give them time to exchange views, look around, and insure against precipitate action.

They were a keen-looking, middle-aged lot, with a few old veterans and one or two tanned faces—like Dev-ereaux's—that suggested more attention to sport than to finance. They talked together in low tones without mentioning the purpose of their gathering until the servants had passed around the coffee and cigars and closed the door behind them. Then Mr. Phillips, whose

massive, clean-cut face suggested Gladstone's, glanced round the table and said without more ado:

"Gentlemen, I suppose you all know why we're here?"

There was no sound of dissent. They had lighted their cigars and settled back, turning their faces expectantly toward his end of the table.

"I don't need to tell you that this Alpha-Omega failure puts us in a most unpleasant position. Of course the loan is safe enough—owing to Mr. Kayne's guaranty; but it will do us no good to appear as the chief creditor of a bankrupt fly-by-night moving-picture concern. There has been a lot of talk—and I may say just criticism—directed lately against the kind of enterprises trust companies are financing. Stockholders are getting uneasy. You all know about the strike suits brought against the Cottonseed National? Confidentially, I understand they had to be settled—for a lot of money. This will hurt our credit. The question is, does the situation call for any unusual action, and, if so, what?"

Silence followed his remarks. No one seemed anxious to take the responsibility of suggesting what was in everybody's mind. Then Thornton Graham, the head of the old, established banking-house of Graham & Co., leaned forward and said:

"Do I understand that the loan was approved by our committee in the usual way?"

"It was not," replied Mr. Phillips. "And I may add that it was made against the express advice and strong opposition of our counsel, Mr. Pepperill."

A murmur ran in and out among the coffee-cups.

"Who are the indorsers?" asked Mr. Graham. "Are they able to meet their obligations as they fall due?"

"I have a confidential report on each of them from our information department," answered the chairman. "I need not bother you with it. They are both theatrical people tied up in a variety of schemes and with no particular financial rating. They are reputed to be well off." He smiled faintly. "But very likely that merely means that their wives are well off."

The banker frowned.

"I should say that the chances of their taking up these notes were more than problematical. Further, it seems to me that our president had shown an extraordinary lack of caution—to say the least—in making such a loan. I am very much surprised!"

Devereaux moved uneasily. That Diana's father should have been guilty of such an indiscretion——!

Mr. Phillips turned to an oldish man beside him—an ex-chairman.

"Mr. Putnam, have you anything to say? Is there any explanation for this—er—extraordinary proceeding of Mr. Kayne's?"

He paused, clearly reluctant to say more.

"Inferentially—but only inferentially," Mr. Putnam admitted at length. "It appears from the newspaper reports of the failure that the capital stock of the Alpha-Omega is controlled by another corporation known as the 'Celebrated Celluloid.' Mr. Kayne holds five thousand shares of the latter company's stock. He may of course be able to explain fully his reasons for the loan, and of course no one has as yet broached the subject."

"Whew!" suddenly whistled the youngest member of the board, who had been gazing out of the window at some pigeons fluttering over the neighboring roof. "Looks to me as though Kayne had been lending money to *himself*!"

A hush of stupefaction descended upon the group. Then suddenly all began to talk at once, gesticulating, pounding the table, arising in couples to argue in corners. What could have struck Kayne? He must have some explanation for a thing like that! It was plain crooked.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" called Mr. Phillips, rapping with his coffee-spoon against his saucer. "Kindly come to order. What shall we do?"

"Fire him!" answered Lamar, the sportsman, crisply.

Devereaux had been sitting with his chin in his hand.

"Mr. Phillips!" he interjected, "I am a very inconspicuous member of this board and I hesitate to make any suggestions to men so much more experienced than I am, but I feel we should not decide so important a matter hastily. If Mr. Kayne has, as Mr. Lamar assumes, been lending money to himself or to a corporation in which he has a financial interest—and he has no justification or adequate explanation—I agree that he should be asked to resign. But he should be given an opportunity to make a defense. Why not call a special meeting of the board, and notify him of the charges against him."

"I don't see why we need notify him of anything," retorted Lamar. "Why give him a chance to—to"—he hesitated a shade confusedly—"to cook up anything? Let's have a special meeting to-morrow noon and simply ask what he's got to say."

"Gentlemen, you have heard what Mr. Devereaux and Mr. Lamar have suggested," remarked Mr. Phillips, "what is your will? Suppose all who are in favor of calling a special meeting as Mr. Lamar proposes raise their right hands."

His eyes swept the circle.

"It is a vote," he announced. "To-morrow, then."

CHAPTER XXII

PLAYING THE GAME

CLAUDIA, Lady Harrowdale, was sitting in her room trying to read. She had heard nothing from Nigel for five days, although flowers had come from him regularly. Usually he called at least twice, and often three times, each week.

She had thought of little during those five days except the problem which Maitland's explanation of the law had raised, and she had reached the conclusion that Diana was right and that he was wrong. As soon as she could discuss the matter properly with Nigel she intended, if he approved, to have Messrs. Crutchfield & Pepperill institute proceedings in Maine for a divorce based on Harrowdale's desertion. She could get her decree in a little over a year, and then Nigel and she could marry.

How curious it seemed to be sitting dreaming of love and marriage for the second time in the same chair where one had first dreamed of love and marriage with another! She got up and looked into the mirror over her mantel. In that light, at any rate, she could see little change in her appearance. Really, not any. Even now she was only twenty-one! Twenty-one! Only just entitled in law to be regarded as an adult. Life all before her! Perhaps in time she would forget the nightmare of her English experience! Nigel was such a dear! She would drop him a line and stir him up! From a silver frame on her table his face with its dark eyes—

eyes much like her own—looked out at her. Her desk was in the bay window, and on her way to it she stopped and struck a few chords upon the piano.

*“Drink to me only with thine eyes
And I will pledge with mine!
Leave but a kiss——”*

A knock interrupted her.

“Come in!” she called over her shoulder.

Jarmon entered bearing a registered letter on a tray.

“Hi took the liberty of signin’ for it, me lady,” said he in a confidential manner.

He was in fact consumed with curiosity, since while the return card had borne the name of Nigel Craig as the sender, the address had not been in his handwriting.

“That is quite all right,” she answered, picking up the heavy envelope.

Jarmon lingered, adjusting a table-cover to watch her. Why was Craig writing instead of coming to see her? And why was the address not in his hand?

“That is all, Jarmon,” said Lady Harrowdale, waiting until he should go to open the letter and filled with a strange disquietude. Why should Nigel be writing to her!

To The Lady Harrowdale
In Care of Rufus Kayne, Esqr.,
Fifth Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

Whose hand had printed that scrambling hump-backed address? Why not his? Foreboding prevented her for the moment from opening the envelope. Then his face in the photograph reassured her and with a paper-cutter she slit the wrapper. The blood fled from

her heart. The entire letter was in the handwriting of some one totally uneducated.

At the top of the first sheet were the words:

Written by James Capper for Conole! Nigel Craig at his Request.

The letter itself read:

dearest Claudia our Problem has been Decided for us we shall not hav to Worry about what we ought to do I hav lost my Site I hav known that this might happen ever since we came back from England but the Doctors told me that unless my eyes got so bad I could not see at all there was still hope for me but last Thursday it happened my Site has gone entirely if the doctors are rite and time only can tell definitely our Dream of happiness is ended for I cannot saddle you with a Blind Man at first I thought I could not bear to go on living but although the War taught me that life was cheap it is not cheap enough for that britons must never be Slaves must they I shall go away drop out of site without any fuss it is the best way do not try to find me God bless you always my darling

NIGEL.

She sat staring at it. She wanted to scream, to shriek at the top of her voice: "No! No! No! It can't be! It can't be!" She could hear herself screaming, but no sound came from her lips. She stared and stared at the letter while the little clock at her elbow ticked and ticked: "Gone! Gone! Everything gone!—Gone! Gone! Everything gone!" It was as if a great iron heel had come crashing down out of the sky and crushed Nigel and herself to earth. Everything gone! The hours passed. She grew stiff and cold, but still she sat staring at the letter, anesthetized by the shock of her grief.

The sounds on the avenue below diminished in volume and finally ceased altogether. The ticking of the

clock filled the room—each tick a knife-thrust through her heart of which she was conscious, yet which she could not feel. Then some unaccustomed noise roused her from coma and for an instant she tried to believe that she had been dreaming. She raised her eyes to the table, whence Nigel looked at her from the silver frame. No!—No! It could not be true! The letter crackled in her hand, and this time a tiny whimper came from her lips. With a cry Claudia threw herself upon her knees before the photograph and crushed it wildly to her with hysterical sobs. Now that her blood moved again—now that she could once more feel—her agony seemed insupportable. Why had God done this to her? Given her Nigel simply to rob her of him! In that moment she reaped the full harvest of her parents' neglect. She saw herself a defenseless child, cheated of every chance of happiness, defrauded of home, marriage, family, love. For in that moment her children meant nothing to her. She had had no parents, her sisters had been strangers to her, her existence with Harrowdale one of unutterable wretchedness!

Then in the depth of her misery, the darkness of her despair, Nigel had come and led her forth into the sunlight again. Once more the sky, the sea, the earth, the flowers had resumed their normal colors. Youth, hope, love, had beckoned to her, laughed with her, showered her with blossoms. How wonderful life could be!—Ah! How terrible life could be! Claspings the picture to her breast, she sank to the floor rocking herself to and fro. The ticking of the clock was now like the pounding of a sledge-hammer upon her brain:

“Gone! Gone! Everything gone!”

She glanced round her room—the hateful room in which her childhood had been spent. Her childhood!

She had never had any childhood! She had never had anything—except Nigel, and now Nigel was torn from her—forever! The walls seemed to contract—to be about to crush her. She hated that house! And everything about it! A prison—a tomb! She could not stay there! Yet there was nowhere for her to go—no arms to which she could flee. She felt that she must die—but that she could not die in that house.

Still holding the picture, she struggled to her feet, threw a wrap over her shoulders, and opened her bedroom door. The landing outside was dimly lighted from below and she silently felt her way down-stairs, past the mezzanine gallery leading to the organ, past the bronze Mercury, until she reached the pink-and-white marble squares of the entrance-hall. An odor of cigarette-smoke lingered there. From among the palms about the organ a gleam of white bespoke the presence of the Greek Slave.

She bungled the heavy chain on the front door, but at length it fell, the key turned, and she pushed it open, standing alone at the top of the brownstone steps. The avenue was a gleaming, leaden river, reflecting endless pools of yellow light. If she could only have thrown herself into it and forgotten her misery! Was she to suffer thus forever? The thought was unbearable.

Did one have to suffer forever? A few blocks away the twin towers of the Cathedral rose toward the stars. She had passed them a thousand times in the past without a thought. But now they seemed like two arms stretched upward in supplication—the arms of the world beseeching the divine mercy. Her own church had meant no more to her than to her father and mother. It had been merely a structure of stone and mortar, like any other semi-official edifice. But in these twin spires typifying man's aspiration for the spiritual, she now for

the first time saw an evidence of his dependency upon a strength greater than his own. As she looked at them something of awe, something of consolation, stole over her. They were, she felt, like two fingers raised in pitying benediction. "O God, our help in ages past!"

Hesitatingly—drawn by an intangible but positive spiritual force—Claudia crossed the street. Slowly she climbed the long flight of entrance steps, each moment her strange feeling of dependency growing stronger and bringing with it a mysterious comfort. The door of the Cathedral was open. Inside, a pale path led through a dark forest of columns to where at a great distance, high upon the altar, two candles burned on either side of the red flickering gleam of the sanctuary lamp. All about her crowded the mysterious shadows of the vast edifice, yet she had no thought of being frightened. Instead, a sense of exaltation—of love—of being merged in something greater than herself—possessed her—she knew that God in some form was there, had always been there, would always be there. Forever!

As she crept toward the altar the light of the candles seemed to grow brighter. Timidly she sank upon her knees at the rail, hugging the photograph to her bosom. "God have mercy upon me!—Christ have mercy upon me!" she murmured over and over. A short distance away hung a crucifix, the features of the dying Saviour shining in relief against the shadows. With her lips to the lips of the photograph she raised her eyes to the crucifix and kept them there; until at length it seemed to her that the eyes that looked down with such tender compassion into her own were none other than the eyes of Nigel.

On the outskirts of a Western city, where the trolley-lines run out and stop in the caked mud of the prairie,

the dark mass of a brick building rose against the yellowing east. It had been hastily erected during the war as a munitions factory, and from its portal thousands of wooden cases had been discharged upon the flat-cars of the switch line connecting it with the terminal four miles distant. Farmers driving to town across the prairie, whether by day or by night, could see the velvet smoke pouring in thick oily masses from its towering chimneys, the flare of its furnaces, hear the dull pound and clank of its never-pausing machines. Its owner and his business associates had divided between them a neat net of five million dollars. For a month or two the building had stood there deserted and silent, looking eastward across the prairie with sightless eyes. Grass had grown up between the ties of the switch line. Small boys had amused themselves by throwing stones through the windows. Tramps had crept in and sheltered themselves among the piles of wastage on the lower floors.

Then one day two men had appeared in a smart limousine and climbed over the building, measuring-tape and note-book in hand.

"Well, what will it cost?" the elder had asked as they emerged from the front door and paused to light cigarettes. The younger made a rapid calculation.

"You can put it into pretty good shape for about eight thousand dollars—at a rough estimate," he replied.

"How about furniture?"

The architect shrugged his shoulders.

"That oughtn't to cost anything to speak of," he said. "I should think you could do that by contract for two or three more."

A few weeks later carpenters, painters, and glaziers had taken possession. New panes took the place of the

broken ones in the windows. The sound of the plane, the hammer and the saw resounded through the empty rooms. Green and white shades appeared in the windows. White paint supplanted black on the doors and trim. A colored man with a rake and hoe wandered about digging up weeds and making piles of the débris. The trolley, which during the war had stopped a quarter of a mile away, extended itself by that much farther toward the prairie. An open shed for waiting passengers was built just outside the gate of the grounds. But paint could not disguise it. It still remained what it had always been—a factory, a repair-shop.

A wisp of gray smoke uncoiled itself from the central chimney—the only moving thing in the otherwise motionless dawn. From the direction of the city came a long-drawn bellow summoning the workers of the world to their tasks. Here and there along the front of the building shades went up. The distant edge of the prairie smouldered and burst into flame. The smoke from the chimney thickened. Another day was coming.

The assistant superintendent stood at the window of his office waiting for his breakfast and holding a telegram in his hand. The thin partitions overhead and about him echoed to all sorts of multitudinous noises. A young man on crutches swung himself into the doorway.

“Breakfast, sir.”

“Tell Timmins that new man ought to be here by nine o’clock. He wired that he was taking the night train from Kansas City,” said the assistant superintendent.

As he spoke his eye caught a taxi floundering through the ruts at the trolley crossing.

“I guess that’s him now!” he said.

The taxi, having crossed the tracks, turned in at the gate and stopped at the foot of the steps, but no one got out. The Irishman who was driving pulled the brake tight, shut off his gas, and slowly climbed down. Then, having opened the door of the taxi, he removed from inside a heavy kit-bag, which he carried to the vestibule above. Returning, he thrust his head inside the vehicle, and with extraordinary gentleness assisted his passenger to get out. The latter stood there patiently. He was obviously young and far better dressed than most of those whose business brought them there, including the superintendent himself.

"Which way?" asked Nigel.

The cabby put his arm about the slight figure.

"This way, sorr! That's good! Two steps more, sorr! There ye are!"

At the top they paused. Nigel handed the man his pocketbook.

"Take your fare and a half-dollar extra for your trouble," said he.

The Irishman fumbled in the purse, carefully counted out the right amount, and added the tip as directed. Having done so, he looked inside the purse, hesitated, glanced at Nigel, and slipped back the half-dollar. Then he returned the purse to its owner.

"Thank ye, sorr!" said he. "I hope ye'll have good luck."

Once more he took Nigel's arm and together they crossed the threshold into the BURTON VOCATIONAL SCHOOL FOR DISABLED SOLDIERS.

Presently he came out, cranked up his car, and took his seat again. With a roar the taxi lurched forward. Across the tracks drifted a cloud of yellow dust, tinged almost to gold by the sun just peeping above the horizon.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SENTENCE

To Rufus Kayne, ignorant of the real crux of the Alpha-Omega situation, the saving grace, so far as it affected himself, seemed to be that none of the notes were as yet due. One for a hundred thousand dollars would mature upon May 1. If by any chance Stein and Savoy did not take it up, he could, he told himself, easily arrange to raise a hundred thousand, and, in a like event, still another hundred three months later. By that time doubtless he could force the indorsers, if backward, to toe the mark. There was no question in his mind as to their financial responsibility, although he knew that such people were always slow about meeting their obligations and usually tried to avoid them in every way possible.

Going all over it, he was satisfied that even if he were obliged ultimately to take up the notes himself, he could manage it. It would cripple him somewhat, but he could manage it—the whole million, if need be, in two years and a half. There was no reason, however, to borrow trouble—Stein and Savoy would come across. There were still six days before the first note would be due and there was no way to anticipate it. Until the day came, the trust company could not fall back upon the indorsers, whose liability would not arise until an actual default in payment upon that date.

Meantime, however, he would do a little investigating, and incidentally put his own house in order.

He had quite a block of railroad stock, and in addition the five thousand shares of "Celebrated Celluloid," the proceeds of which would be almost enough to meet the first note. But he had not liked the old loan clerk's attitude; it worried him. And the *Post* had an editorial on the dangers of modern banking methods, mentioning no names, but only too obviously aimed at the Utopia.

He tried to take an optimistic view of the whole matter, but that night he had difficulty in getting any sleep. Daybreak found him wide awake staring at the ceiling. At that depressing hour he was filled with all sorts of apprehensions. He even wondered if Mercedes might not be planning to hold him up for some money. She had a lot of his handwriting. If she wanted to be nasty——!

The sun rose and the clouds of anxiety began to dissolve. Breakfast revived him considerably. But the *Times* and the *World* both commented editorially upon the invidious practice on the part of trust companies of engaging in speculative businesses under the guise of making loans. The next regular board meeting would be on April 30, and he realized that very likely some one would bring the matter up. He must be prepared with a plausible explanation. Meanwhile he would liquidate enough securities to pay off the note if Stein and Savoy should welch.

He glanced through his mail with some nervousness, fearful lest it might contain a letter from Mercedes. Then, reassured, and having lit a cigar, he called for a quotation on "Celebrated Celluloid." He had paid $14\frac{5}{8}$ for his five thousand shares, and it had fluctuated around that figure ever since, but the slip came back "Offered at 3; no bid." He stared at it dumbfounded.

Then he smiled feebly. The "three" must be an error for "thirteen."

He told the clerk to verify the quotation and turned to the *Wall Street Journal* to look up the last sale. "Celebrated Celuloid" had been active for several days around $2\frac{1}{2}$! The last sale had been of 16,000 shares at $2\frac{3}{8}$. The knowledge roused all his fears. He had lost nearly seventy-five thousand dollars. Bad enough! Particularly as that was the money he had intended to use to meet the Alpha-Omega note—if he had to meet it. Was the bottom dropping out of the whole moving-picture business?

He recalled with some dismay that Stein and Savoy had both said they were heavy holders of "C. C." The two promoters might go under with it! Well, he would not sell his stock at any such figure as that! It was disconcerting, for he would now be obliged to take a fifty-point loss if he sold his Great Northern and Northern Pacific. It was small consolation that he could offset it against profits on his income-tax return.

His cigar soured and he screwed it savagely into the tray of Pompeian bronze on the desk beside him. Anyhow, he had plenty of time. He would consult Pepperill—no, he could not bear the thought of the old man's sardonic smile, his dry "I-told-you-so" chuckle! He'd ask Maitland to step over. In his agitation he had overlooked the notice lying on his desk.

A few minutes before noon, returning from the trust department, where he had gone to verify an inventory of securities, he noticed that the door of the board room was open and that several of the directors, including Senator Krass, were standing in the outer office. Inquiring the reason, he was informed by a clerk that a special directors' meeting had been called for twelve

o'clock. They had been too quick for him! He had had no time to work out an adequate explanation with regard to his part in making the loan. Somebody must have smelled a rat. And they had not given him notice—that was suspicious, even irregular! This struck him as most ominous. He decided not to attend the meeting, but went back to his office and lit another cigar. They should not catch him napping!

Fifteen minutes later old Brackmar appeared and informed him that the directors wished to examine the papers lying upon the desk beside him relating to the loan to the Alpha-Omega. The significance of the request was heightened by the loan clerk's obvious nervousness. Yes! They were looking the matter up. It was bad! Without reply, Rufus pushed the envelope toward the old man. He had wanted to ask him what the devil it was all about, but the words would not come.

After the clerk had gone out with the papers he was relieved that he had not shown any such anxiety. He must put on a bold front. He was going to see the loan paid—and that was all there was to it. A million dollars—penalty enough! But why had they called a special meeting?

His throat went dry and he got up heavily and poured out a glass of the Poland water that always stood on a side-table, spilling some of it down the front of his waistcoat. He wiped it off and leaned against the table. An odd sound came from his parched lips. If only there was somebody he could talk to—somebody who would understand! He almost wished that Elizabeth were there; she, at least, would be sympathetic, if unintelligently so. Never—not even that horrible morning in the Annex at Atlantic City—had he felt so utterly alone—an unloved atom in a hostile, malevolent uni-

verse. Alone—! He was roused by old Brackmar's queer, rusty voice:

"Mr. Phillips wished me to ask if it would be convenient for you to step into the board room for a moment, sir."

Rufus nodded. The muscles in his neck were vibrating. The objects about him refused to focus. He reached for the Poland bottle and drank another glass of water—and then part of a third, again spilling it. This would not do. He must pull himself together.

He went into the tiled lavatory adjoining his office and looked in the glass. The face he saw reflected there was yellow—drawn—aged. He adjusted his necktie carefully and brushed his hair. Well, now for it!

As he opened the door of the board room he wondered why he had been so flustered, for there was a half-rising movement and a general murmur of greeting as Mr. Phillips arose and ushered him to a vacant chair at the head of the table next to Senator Krass.

"Good morning, gentlemen," said Rufus, with a smile. "What can I do for you?"

Then he saw Mr. Pepperill sitting in a corner and something turned over inside his abdomen. Mr. Phillips, who had returned to his own seat at the other end of the room, took up a sheaf of papers.

"Mr. President," he said, and his tone and manner were very gentle, for he was a kindly man and had real sympathy for Kayne, "the board has been in conference regarding the million-dollar loan to the Alpha-Omega Company which has just gone into the hands of a receiver. This loan seems to have been made upon security so doubtful, as well as for the purpose of financing a venture so out of the usual course of this company's business, that the directors feel that they should ask

for a full statement of the circumstances surrounding it. In the interest of time, however, I might add that Mr. Pepperill states that he advised you against making this loan, both on grounds of business and general policy. Is that correct?"

Rufus inclined his head.

"My recollection is that it did not meet with his approval," he replied calmly. "Mr. Pepperill's opinion was not asked, and it was not followed. He was consulted only with regard to the sufficiency of the papers. The loan was made upon realty free and clear of mortgage, valued at over six million dollars. The business showed large profits. Our company had an enormous surplus and a limited field of investment. The notes were indorsed by two gentlemen of the highest financial responsibility.

"But even if there had been any virtue in Mr. Pepperill's original objections, the fact that I personally guaranteed the loan did away with them entirely and made it absolutely safe. Looking back over the transaction, I see nothing to regret. The business has not lived up to expectations. That is the fortune of war. But the notes are good and will be met as they fall due. That is the salient fact."

He spoke deliberately, confidently. After all, he knew these men and they knew him.

"May I inquire," remarked Senator Krass sententially, turning a cold gray eye upon him, "why, if, as you say, you regarded this proposed loan of a million dollars as safe and desirable, you should have added your own indorsement to those already on the notes?"

Kayne smiled again—this time familiarly. Krass was an old friend.

"I don't wonder you ask, senator," he answered

easily. "My only reason was that Mr. Pepperill had expressed dissatisfaction with the security. I believe that he referred to the studios as 'a lot of hothouses.' Isn't that what you called them, Mr. Pepperill?"

"It was," replied the old lawyer grimly.

"Besides which," went on Rufus more hurriedly, "he had animadverted upon the indorsers, whom, however, he did not know. I did know them, on the other hand, and I had implicit confidence in them. But I felt that if the loan—to which I was already morally committed—was to be made the subject of criticism, I would, in order to show my own good faith in the matter, guarantee it myself. I could hardly have done more!"

Rufus paused, believing that he had made a telling point. Several of the others were smoking and he felt in his pocket for the cigar that was always there, opened his penknife, deliberately cut off the end, and lighted it. He congratulated himself on having run in the words "good faith" so unostentatiously and made them do double duty.

Then young Lamar—Lamar, who had dined repeatedly at the Kaynes' at Northampton and to whom Rufus had lost hundreds of dollars at golf and poker—playing with the inkstand in front of him, asked almost insolently:

"Pardon the question, but did you have a personal interest in this loan?"

The color flared into Rufus's face and he thrust out his jaw, as he looked expectantly around the table for the others to share his resentment.

"Of course not!" he shot back angrily.

Senator Krass stroked his pale, purple chin.

"Are we explicitly to understand," he inquired, "that

you had no personal interest whatever to advance in the making of this loan—either directly or indirectly? That you held none of the stock, bonds, or other obligations of this corporation? Or of others associated with it?”

“Absolutely! How can you ask such a question, senator?”

There was a ring of honest indignation in Kayne's voice. If they thought anything like that, they were jolly well barking up the wrong tree! But how could either Krass or Lamar imagine any such thing! The sportsman muttered at the paper-cutter, to which he seemed suddenly to have taken a violent prejudice.

“Do you own stock in any moving-picture concern?” pursued Senator Krass.

They had got to the fact, Rufus perceived, that he owned some “Celebrated Celluloid”! Well, there was nothing in that.

“Unfortunately I do,” he replied, simulating a faint touch of amusement. “I own several thousand shares in a moving-picture company, which cost me nearly seventy-five thousand dollars, but which to-day I could hardly get rid of as a present.”

He grinned slightly at Mr. Phillips, as if to suggest that everybody made mistakes on occasion and that there were accidents in the best-regulated families.

“And you still say that you had no interest in making this loan?” demanded Lamar with obvious disgust.

The brutality of his manner did not seem to create a particularly unfavorable impression upon any one except Rufus.

“What do you expect me to infer from your question, sir?” he demanded haughtily.

“Oh—! What's the use!” roared Lamar. “Have you got the face to tell us that you didn't know your

‘Celebrated Celluloid’ company owned the ‘Alpha-Omega’?”

“I do! Yes!” answered Rufus in a thick voice. Thump-thump-thump! Involuntarily he put his hand to his heart.

“Gentlemen!” he cried. “You can’t believe that I—! It’s—it’s—preposterous!”

“But it’s the fact, isn’t it?” retorted Lamar.

“Not to my knowledge!” said Rufus. “I bought that stock only a few weeks ago on what I regarded as inside information——”

“From whom?” inquired Lamar, interrupting. “Let’s get at the bottom of this!”

Rufus choked. There must be a way out of this utterly false position. And yet every minute he was getting in deeper and deeper.

“From Mr. Savoy,” he answered faintly.

“One of the indorsers on the ‘Alpha-Omega’ notes?”

“Yes——” stammered Rufus, red to his hair. “But it never occurred to me that there was any connection between the two companies. My word ought to suffice for that. You ought to know me well enough——!”

He stared at them desperately, but they refused to meet his glance. Krass even wandered over and took a seat beside Mr. Pepperill. The plane of the table seemed to shift and to float for a moment in mid-air. They must believe him! How could they help doing so! Mr. Phillips was speaking:

“Of course you recognize that if at the time you made this loan you owned or contemplated purchasing an interest in a corporation holding stock in the borrowing company, your action would be subject to severe criticism—irrespective of whether you did or did not personally guaranty the payment of the money?”

“Naturally,” murmured Kayne.

"Then," continued the chairman, and his tone was not devoid of pity, "as all the other facts seem to be conceded, the only question at issue is whether at the time you had, or expected to acquire, an interest in this holding company."

The tears rose to Rufus's eyes and his body shook. He bowed his face on the table in his hands. So they thought him a crook! After all these years!

"My God!" he groaned. "I suppose you've only my word for it, but isn't that enough? Do you suppose I'd jeopardize my name, my position, the honor of my family for a few extra dividends? I've no need of money. I made that loan honestly. And I guaranteed it voluntarily in order that no one could question my sincerity. Later, I bought the other stock simply because I heard it talked about. I see now how the whole thing is susceptible of misconstruction. I admit that it has a bad look—if you disbelieve what I say!"

His chin quivered.

"Gentlemen!" he begged, stretching out his arms. "You must take my word for this! My services to this company entitle me to your consideration. My record is clean. My reputation is of the best. I have an old father over eighty years of age; I have a wife, three grown children, and two grandchildren. Do you believe that at fifty-five years of age I would do a thing—a cheap thing—like this?"

His welled tears blotted the faces about him—once so kindly, now so merciless—as he realized that this of which he was now under suspicion was no more cheap and contemptible than his conduct with Mercedes had been. He was a rotter! Then, to his surprise, he felt a hand upon his shoulder.

"Mr. Kayne," he heard Phillips saying, "I think I

can assure you on behalf of myself and my associates that we do not any longer suspect you of having any ulterior motive in making this loan. This has been very painful for all of us. Perhaps it would be as well if you should retire and give us an opportunity for discussion."

"Thank you, gentlemen!" said Rufus humbly, as with bent head he left the room.

The men around the table looked silently at one another for several seconds. Then Senator Krass remarked:

"You did quite right, Mr. Phillips. We're all sorry for the man. There's no use rubbing it in."

"Don't you believe what he says?" challenged Devereaux indignantly.

"I'm glad I don't have to decide that question," answered the senator in a pointed manner.

Thornton Graham signed that he desired to be heard.

"Of course Mr. Kayne should be required to refund at once the entire sum advanced on the loan. But should he be asked to resign? That is the point. I do not think he intended to commit any irregularity, but under the circumstances is he a fit man to continue as president of the company?"

"No!" replied Lamar shortly. "He's not! There's too much of this sort of thing going on. Officers of trust companies should be held to their responsibilities. Stockholders have rights, and we represent them."

"This incident will seriously affect the company's credit and its business," continued Mr. Graham. "We're all sorry for Mr. Kayne. He has made a good president—an exceptionally good president—up to this time, but so far as we are concerned his usefulness is over. I subscribe heartily to Mr. Lamar's remarks

about our duty to our stockholders. We have no right to retain such a man as president of our company after he has demonstrated his inability to conduct our business with proper regard for their interests."

CHAPTER XXIV

HIS BACK TO THE WALL

CARLYLE said that for one man who can stand prosperity there are a hundred who will stand adversity. Rufus Kayne took his blow like a man. It had fallen swiftly. Twenty minutes after leaving the directors' meeting he had been officially informed that he must, within thirty days, reimburse the trust company for the full amount of the loan to the Alpha-Omega and immediately place his resignation in the hands of the board, to take effect at the end of the same period.

He neither questioned the justice of this decision nor entertained the thought of denying his responsibility, partly because he realized that the evidence against him was sufficient to convince the court of public opinion, and partly, as well, because of a curious desire to make a clean sweep of everything—pay the price—and start all over again. There would be enough money left to keep them going, he had no fear of the wolf of famine howling at the kitchen door, but the raising of a million dollars—unless Stein and Savoy could be forced to make good—would mean an entire readjustment of his affairs, the liquidation of all his negotiable securities, and the sale of his houses, both in New York and Northampton.

As each day passed he had less and less confidence that Stein and Savoy would pay. In the pride of his financial power he had handed them a million nonchalantly, carelessly—almost as a gesture; but he now discovered

that he could not borrow a like amount himself. His original fortune had shrunk, owing to the war, to less than two million dollars, and the bulk of it was invested in such forms that it could not be withdrawn. He was, in addition, carrying several heavy loans. Only by disposing of his realty could he meet his obligation; and the sale of the Fifth Avenue house would necessitate the disclosure to his father of what had happened.

The thought of this dismayed him. If only some way could be devised whereby the house could be saved from the wreck. He revolved this ceaselessly. If Stein and Savoy could be made to pay up promptly as each note fell due, he might be able to work it out. He would know soon enough. He had already deposited a hundred thousand dollars, the proceeds of his railroad stock—representing a net loss of over fifty thousand—to cover their default in case it should occur. No word of what had taken place at the directors' meeting had leaked out, and he still came and went as usual, transacting the company's business as its president.

Rufus had, in fact—after all his years of easy success—taken hold of the desperate situation in which he now found himself with a certain sense of exhilaration. It would be fanciful to say that he derived any enjoyment from his grim determination to make the best of a bad business, but the necessity of a struggle, even only of one to save his material fortunes, stimulated and invigorated him. If it were not for his father! After all, he was not too old to begin life over again and make a success! Success! Poor Rufus!

On the afternoon of April 30 he received a call from Mr. Mark Krabfleisch, who, it appeared, had in some mysterious way secured his own appointment as attorney for the receiver of the bankrupt Alpha-Omega Com-

pany. There was about him an excess of cordiality—an unctuousness—that filled Rufus with distaste from the moment of his entrance.

The attorney took from his pocket two very large cigars and offered one to the banker even before the latter had invited him to be seated, and it was obvious that he wished his visit to be a friendly one. Afterward Rufus recalled the fact that the lawyer had closed the door to the outer office, complaining of a slight cold in his head. At the time, however, the incident had made no impression upon him.

Mr. Krabfleisch, whose flabby cheeks lost themselves in a turn-over collar, leaving his small chin protruding like a misplaced Adam's apple, proved to be of an astonishing volubility. Fixing Rufus with a beady black eye, he poured forth a breathless torrent of soft sound not susceptible of interruption; and which instantly surrounded, overran, and submerged any comment or question from the listener. Having exhausted his breath, he inhaled and instantly began again, as if fearful lest a moment of silence should be fatal.

Rufus could not make out what it was all about. Indeed, Mr. Krabfleisch managed in the short space of half an hour to cover most topics of interest, if not concerned with the heavens above, at least connected with things earthly or subterranean. And all this, so far as Rufus could observe, in complete repose save for a slight oscillation of the lower lip and the sudden shifting of his little eyes.

He began by expressing much regret over the unexpected failure of the Alpha-Omega Company and its consequent inability to meet its notes—at least for the present. It was quite possible that in time they could get on their feet again. The moving-picture

business, he explained, like all enterprises in any way dependent upon public caprice, had violent ups and downs. What he would like to do—and confidentially what Judge Marcus, who had appointed him, thought ought to be done—was to arrange a settlement on a basis of part cash and the balance in long-term notes. It might, at first glance, look like pretty small pickings, but the only way anybody would ever get any money was by giving them a chance.

In a word, then, he proposed that the Utopia Trust Company should take in exchange for its million-dollar claim a cash payment of fifteen thousand dollars and a series of notes payable at the end of three years, aggregating nine hundred and eighty-five thousand. Then sweeping aside Rufus's involuntary ejaculation of protest, he wheezed on again.

Well, Mr. Kayne had better think it over. Everything was worth thinking over. But that was what Mr. Stein and Mr. Savoy were going to do, and their claims were considerably larger than that of the Utopia.

This seemed to remind him, for the first time, that Mr. Stein and Mr. Savoy were indorsers on the Utopia notes and that they had a contingent liability. He remarked with seeming inconsequence that they were peculiar men—both of them; and told a long rambling story of their various misfortunes in different parts of the world, in each of which somebody seemed to have gone to jail. It was all very confused, and Rufus wondered what on earth it had to do with anything in which he was concerned.

And then suddenly a chill crept up his spine. Mr. Krabfleisch was recounting an experience of Mr. Savoy in which the latter had joined a party of ladies and gentlemen in an excursion to Cape May—in New

Jersey, of all places in the world! On their return there had been a great deal of trouble about the Mann Act. Of course Mr. Kayne knew about the Mann Act?

Rufus, gazing hypnotized at him, made no answer. It was the act, Mr. Krabfleisch recalled, that made it a crime for a gentleman and lady to go from one State of the Union to another for certain purposes. Mr. Savoy had had a very unpleasant time—very, very unpleasant—with the United States District Attorney. He had had to spend a lot of money—a lot of money! And he had never forgotten it. He was a peculiar man.

Now about the notes. Both Mr. Stein and Mr. Savoy were down and out. They had put everything they had into the Alpha-Omega; and had nothing left in the world but their own claims against it. It was hopeless to expect to hold them to their liability on those notes. It would be much more agreeable all around if they could be released in some way. Mr. Krabfleisch felt sure that Mr. Kayne with all his influence could arrange it. After all, it would make no difference in the end, but it would be so much pleasanter. Mr. Savoy was a very nice man, but he was peculiar. Mr. Kayne knew Mr. Savoy very well, did he not? Mr. Krabfleisch understood that they had a mutual friend in—*Miss Delaval*.

Stark terror congealed the membranes of Rufus Kayne's throat. The Mann Act! He knew all about it—a frequent subject of jest at "The Corner Store." The devils! They had got him! Had put up a game on him. Planned it all along from the very first. Salted away their million, probably, and given that little slut of a Mercedes her rake-off!

He stared at Krabfleisch with the fixed stare of a dead man—his jaw hanging. But he could not see Krab-

fleisch, for his eyes would not focus. He heard him speaking and was conscious of the blur when he arose. Krabfleisch was sure the matter could be arranged! The door closed softly behind him.

But Rufus did not move. He was choking. Sweat poured from him. Blackmail! He thrust two fingers into his collar the better to breathe. This would ruin him forever—prevent his ever taking another position—disgrace the whole lot of them!

Trembling he got up and locked the door through which Krabfleisch had made his exit. Then he felt his way into the lavatory and washed his face. It was like washing the face of a corpse! He felt weak—hardly able to stand—as if he had been ill. He was ill. Everything seemed to be tumbling about him—going to pieces! He could hear himself making queer, meaningless sounds. Going mad, was he?

He felt for a cigar and tried to light it, unsuccessfully—by the wrong end. He dropped it and began to cry.

“Oh, my God!” he whimpered. “Oh, my God!”

But God did not answer.

He perceived that he could not stand this thing alone. That, left to himself, he was quite capable of doing something foolish. But to whom could he turn? What friend had he in whom he could confide? Not one! His brother James?—Krass?—Thrum? He uttered a hollow laugh more like a groan. Pepperill? There had been a time— No! Not Pepperill! Anybody but Pepperill!—Maitland! Why, yes! Of course! He turned to him for everything. Only that very morning he had brought his will down from the house and asked Lloyd to draw a codicil to it. They ought to get busy and execute it.

The youth was in his customary attitude—leaning

back in his chair sucking on his short pipe—when the banker entered his office. The smell of the smoke was comforting to Kayne. The will lying on the blotter caught his eye. He was not interested in wills! Under the electric light his face was livid, and Lloyd was startled—fearing that Kayne had had a heart attack.

“What’s the matter, sir?” he cried, leaping to his feet and seizing him by the arm. “Take this chair!”

Kayne sank into it.

“I’m all right,” he said. “I’ve merely had a bit of a jar.”

He pulled out another cigar, fumbling it like an old man, as he gradually regained control of himself.

“Thanks!”

This time he got the right end.

“I want your advice on a personal matter. The fact is, I’ve made rather a fool of myself. I haven’t done anything wrong—but what I have done is susceptible of misconstruction. The fact is I loaned some of our money to a subsidiary company of a corporation in which I am a stockholder without knowing the relationship between them. And it’s all mixed up with another affair with a young woman—to whom I never did the slightest harm. However—I’m threatened with blackmail.”

His face had resumed its normal color. He spoke in his customary even tone.

“It’s rather ‘a tangled web’—complicated as those things are apt to be. Anyhow, I have been asked to resign.”

“What!” cried Lloyd. It was inconceivable!

“Yes. My connection with the Utopia ceases after May 25.”

Maitland did not reply for several moments.

"I can't tell you how sorry I am for you!" he said at length. "If there is anything in the wide world I can do—! Of course I can't understand——"

"I don't blame you!" answered Rufus. "I can hardly understand it myself. But the situation has got beyond me. I can't cope with it. You have managed to become tied up with most of my affairs—and I wish your good opinion besides. I want somebody to know the truth. If anything should happen to me——"

Lloyd looked at him quickly.

"No, I don't mean that!" retorted Kayne shortly. "I want help. I know you'll give me a fair hearing and an honest opinion. You can imagine this is pretty hard for me!"

His lip quivered.

"I don't want you to think I am any worse than I am! You know my family, you see, and—well, some time perhaps you can explain, if worst comes to worst, that in a way I'm the victim of circumstances." He laughed. "I suppose every—convict says the same thing! But I think you'll agree that I really am. Now that I've made a mess of my life—now that it's too late—I can see why—I've had the wrong idea from the start. The things I've been after haven't been worth while. I've been good from a wrong motive and, I suppose, that's the next thing to being bad."

He let his head sink between his shoulders, which seemed to crumple beneath its weight.

"The irony of the situation is," he went on half as if to himself, "that if I hadn't always lived clean—hadn't followed the straight and narrow path—had let myself go like other fellows—I'd probably not be in the mess I'm in now. The children of evil are said to be wiser than the children of light, aren't they? I'd have had the

wisdom of experience. I would have avoided the appearance of evil—good advice, that!”

He straightened himself and laid his cigar on the desk.

“One doesn’t realize how close he is to the precipice. One misstep and he’s gone—dragging everything with him! I’m telling you this merely so you’ll not judge me too harshly. I can see now that I should not have made that million-dollar loan to the Alpha-Omega in the face of Pepperill’s opposition. You remember that I guaranteed the notes?”

Maitland nodded.

“I never did understand why,” he said.

“Simply because Mr. Pepperill disapproved the loan—only to be decent! Yet that is the reason they are throwing me out—forcing me to resign. Coupled with the fact that afterward I bought some stock in another company that controlled the first—of which I was ignorant at the time.

“Well, that’s done. I’m going! I’ve got to start all over again. But I don’t mind that so much. I don’t even mind being obliged to take up the loan myself—although it may mean selling all my real property. What I do mind is the fact that these two scoundrels who induced me to make the loan are now threatening me with a prosecution under the Mann Act if I proceed against them upon their indorsements.”

“But what does the Mann Act have to do with their liability upon these notes?”

“Through this man Savoy I made the acquaintance of a young actress named Mercedes Delaval. She interested me. I ‘fell for her,’ as the expression goes—made a fool of myself over her, but I never did her any harm. I’m not proud of the affair, but there was nothing wrong about it in the ordinary sense. There might

have been, of course. No doubt they intended that there should be. I'm satisfied it was a put-up job to get me in a position where I would not dare to sue them on their indorsements. Krabfleisch, their lawyer, has just left my office——”

“But how does Miss Delaval——” began Maitland.

“I took her to Atlantic City. There was a party of us. We motored down. It was all entirely regular. Just a lark—an excursion. But my name is on the hotel register and so is hers.”

Maitland was aghast.

“Good God!” he ejaculated. He could see the headlines in the papers—the photographs of Mercedes in her leopard-skin juxtaposed with those of Rufus Kayne in his cutaway—of Mrs. Kayne, of Diana, Claudia, Sheila!

They need not even go to the length of having Kayne arrested for a violation of the Mann Act to accomplish that. It would be amply sufficient and quite in order for Mercedes to bring an action against him based on some imaginary contractual obligation. They could hold the other in reserve lest he should fight the case. And if he did, and they stimulated a prosecution under the Federal law, they might even succeed in putting Kayne in jail. He would not be the only obstinate millionaire who had landed in Atlanta under the same charge.

“If you do not proceed against Stein and Savoy on their indorsements, will they stay quiet?”

“I think so.”

“How about the Delaval woman? Is she likely to make trouble?”

“I don't see why she should,” answered Rufus bluntly. “She has no claim on me of any kind whatsoever. It's quite possible that she may have been an unconscious tool in Savoy's hands, or he may have utilized a situation

which grew up inadvertently. She seemed like a nice girl. I do not think that she would make any trouble for me if left to herself."

"She's a friend of your daughter's."

Kayne blinked at him.

"A friend—of Diana's?" he repeated, incredulous.

"Exactly."

A flush gathered upon the face of the banker.

"Impossible!"

"I have met her myself at Miss Kayne's studio."

"Do you mean that Diana associates with women like that?"

His mind reverted to the midnight motor run with Mercedes to Atlantic City.

"You said yourself that she seemed like a nice girl!"

The color of Kayne's face deepened and his eyes refused to meet those of the lawyer. Nothing could have more startlingly demonstrated to him the consequences of his own reckless disregard of his responsibility toward his children than the fact that he might have taken as his mistress this girl who was a friend of one of them.

He remembered how Diana, on the occasion when he had lunched at the Croyon in the company of Stein and Savoy, had addressed the former familiarly as "Al" and the latter as "Tad." Was it conceivable that his eldest daughter was a friend and intimate of these two blackmailers? That she was accustomed to entertain them and their women? What did he know of her habits, of her associates? What was there to prevent her from becoming another Mercedes?

"How soon are you obliged to take up these notes?" asked Maitland, drawing over a pad and taking up a pencil.

"By May 25—the day my resignation takes effect," replied the banker.

"Of course they are valueless—can't be discounted for anything?"

"Not for a cent!"

"Can you raise the money?"

"Only by selling my two houses—unless Stein or Savoy make good."

Suddenly Rufus Kayne laid his head upon his hands.

"I'm at my wit's end!" he declared. "I've lost my nerve. I want somebody to buck me up—to tell me what to do. To think for me and stand back of me."

There was a pause, during which Kayne mopped his eyes with his handkerchief.

"Well, you've come to the right place!" Lloyd assured him. "And we'll hope for the best. Let's see now, our first question is: Shall you sue Stein and Savoy or settle on their terms? Well, they're a pair of professional blackmailers and bankrupts. If you proceed against them, you'll get nothing except a summons and you may find yourself in jail—a rich man has very little chance these days. No. I guess you'd better not sue Messrs. Stein and Savoy."

He made a dot on the pad, smiled slightly, and carefully drew a circle around it.

"Now then! Next question: How are you going to raise a million dollars by May 25? You say that you can do so by the sale of your real estate, but of course you don't want to do that unless you have to. Can't you borrow the money?"

Rufus shook his head.

"I've already sold most of my marketable securities and realized one hundred thousand dollars. I might perhaps, at the outside, raise another hundred thousand.

All my other investments are non-liquid—frozen, so to speak. I shall need at least eight hundred thousand dollars. My father has already turned over his fortune to my brother James, to my sister Mrs. Mallory, and myself. Neither of them is in a position to lend me any such sum or even a substantial fraction of it. My town house has a mortgage on it already, put there for the purpose of meeting taxation. My country house is not worth more than a hundred and fifty thousand—if that much. I shall have to sell both of them. I can't raise the money otherwise."

It almost seemed at the moment as if Rufus Kayne took a certain grim satisfaction in the definiteness of this knowledge.

"But, after all," continued Lloyd, "this is only a temporary embarrassment. Haven't you any friends or business associates who either individually or as a syndicate could underwrite your liability or let you have the money on what collateral you have?"

"No!—None!" answered Kayne laconically.

There was a circular containing a printed list of the trust company's directors lying upon Maitland's desk and he reached out and pulled it toward him. Surely among them there must be one or more who would come to the banker's assistance. After all, it would be only a temporary accommodation and ultimately safe.

"How about Senator Krass?" he inquired, running his eye down the list. He knew the two had been very friendly.

"The hypocritical old wolf!" ejaculated Rufus.

"Mr. Phillips?"

"No."

"Or Mr. Graham?"

"Never in the world!"

Maitland kept on, rapidly skimming over the names.

"Vandergrift—Phelps—Thompson?"

"No! No! You don't suppose the very men who are kicking me out and insisting upon my paying this money are going to lend it to me?"

"How about Mr. Pepperill?"

"Bah!"

"Devereaux?"

Maitland bit his lips. He had read the name automatically. The two men looked away from one another. Rufus had already thought of Devereaux as a solution of his difficulties. To the proprietor of Treasure Island a loan of a million dollars on any sort of security would be a bagatelle. Any bank in the city would make it upon his indorsement or possibly upon his mere request. But on what ground could Rufus ask him for financial assistance? They were not friends. Their only business connection was as co-directors of the trust company from which Kayne was about to resign and to which he was obligated to refund the million dollars in question.

The only possible claim which Rufus had upon the sportsman was through his daughter. Should it be known that he had borrowed from Devereaux—particularly any such sum—the situation would be susceptible of the grossest misconstruction; would suggest an intimacy between the sportsman and Diana which, even if it in fact did not exist, might then fairly be assumed, and which naturally would be viewed by a cynical world as polite blackmail.

"Leave Devereaux out of it!" he answered with a scowl. "There's no one. All my business associates are connected with the Utopia. There's no help for it. I've gone over the whole thing. I've got to realize on

my two houses—and at once. Frankly, I don't care very much. I never liked either of them. The thing that hurts is telling my father. He's eighty-one years old and not very strong. I'm afraid it will hit him pretty hard. He has a grossly exaggerated idea of my position—and my character. There's no other way out of this mess."

"Not on your statement of the case," agreed Lloyd.

"Then the sooner we get rid of them the better. I'll leave the matter entirely to you. Private sale or auction, as you may deem best."

"There's very little time to negotiate a sale," said Maitland.

"Then arrange for an auction. Real estate is pretty high now, everything considered. Sell the furnishings at the same time. Whoever buys the house might bid them up. We ought to clear six hundred thousand over the mortgage."

"Very well, sir!—I'll take it up with the Peterman people to-morrow morning."

Rufus arose and stretched his arms.

The action, while natural enough—had a certain automaton-like quality. He seemed preternaturally calm. Lloyd watched him nervously, expecting momentarily an explosion of some sort. People didn't act like that under such circumstances!

"Thank Heaven, that's settled!" remarked Rufus, using almost the same formula as he had on reading of Sheila's début the morning after. "Sometimes it seems as if everything were tumbling about your head, but if you take 'em one by one somehow—you generally manage to muddle through. Do you remember our first meeting?"

Maitland recalled it very well. The memory of it

had in fact been obtruding itself upon him for some time during the interview.

"You consulted me about your daughter, Lady Harrowdale," he replied.

"Yes. Pepperill turned me over to you. I thought at first you were too inexperienced. But I was mistaken. You've done a lot more for me than Pepperill ever did. Funny how you associate good or bad fortune with different people. I'm not superstitious—not a bit! But I've never had any luck with Pepperill."

"Wasn't he your adviser during the most successful part of your business career?" inquired Maitland, rallying to the support of his old friend.

Kayne brushed a stray lock from his temple.

"That's so—he was," he admitted with a puzzled air. "All the same, I don't have the feeling that I had any luck with him. Now with you it's entirely different. I feel somehow as if I'd had good luck—whereas, in fact ever since you've acted as my attorney, it's been just one damn thing after another! Funny— isn't it?"

He put one foot on a rung of the chair in front of him and gazed round the room as if amused by his thoughts.

"Queer old world! I suppose you'd say that I'd been a successful man. I guess I can say that without false modesty. I was successful right up to the moment they demanded my resignation as president of this trust company. A hard wallop, that! Hurt my pride. The curious part of it is, though, that looking back over my life—just as I had the idea I'd never had any luck with Pepperill—it doesn't seem as if I'd had any luck at all. Understand me? I have an impression just the other way—of failure—up to the time they fired me. And the queerest part of all is that since that time, ever since I've been down and out—except possibly for a bad

moment over that Delaval thing—I've had a sense of being in luck—of relief—silver-lining-to-the-cloud sort of business. That's where you come in—with the silver lining."

He chuckled, stroking his chin.

"Krass would think I was a fool if he heard me. So would James, Thrum, Graham, Follansbee—all that old crowd, I guess. Well, they're all part of my bad luck! I'd be glad never to see any of 'em again! Be glad of a fresh deal all round."

Maitland had lit his pipe again and was leaning back against the wall. He had never had much respect for Kayne—had always regarded him as a rather poor thing—until now.

"If you really feel that way," he said, "there must be a reason for it."

"Of course there's a reason!" answered his client eagerly. "If you knew the whole story—all the details of this Mercedes business, for instance—you'd understand it—just as I do. We're all of us walking the tight rope—every man jack of us. The ones who have learned to keep their balance go right along as a matter of course—no danger at all! The others fall off. If you've got the right sort of ideals and stick to them, you never get into any trouble—never have to worry—you're safe. If you haven't, you're in danger every minute. Well, I didn't have the right sort of ideals—I didn't have the balance. Over I went!"

He put on his hat. There was a look akin to serenity on his broad sallow face.

"Well, good night!" he said.

CHAPTER XXV

HIMSELF AGAIN

RUFUS KAYNE had entered his trust company that morning a figure; he left it a man. He had for some time been going through a process by virtue of which the sawdust in his veins was being liquefied into blood. Even his disreputable experience with Mercedes had helped to humanize him. But it had been left for the experiences of the afternoon to complete his awakening, to open his eyes and show him exactly what he was—a shoddy second-rater, a cheap sham, a person whose conduct had even savored of criminality. Pride vanished. He no longer—as usual, when riding down in the elevator—saw himself a financial Jove descending in a cloud from his Olympian throne; no longer felt it necessary to bear himself as one of the great ones of the earth, to “throw a front,” as he might have said; no longer to look down upon his fellows as from a height.

The balloon of his arrogance had burst and he was sailing earthward, dangling from the parachute of humiliation. He had not yet got near enough to the ground for the common herd to be able to see him, but he was coming—a swaying, deflated dummy of what had once been a regal figure in the court of Vanity Fair. Always Rufus theretofore had condescended to those about him, nodding stiffly to the starter—if at all. To-night he called him “Jim” and asked how much off time he got. He really felt the relief which any royal personage must feel when *incognito* he finds it no longer necessary to

pose and strut. For he perceived that he had been strutting and posing all his life, trying to make himself conform to his idea of what a financier should appear to be, and wholly unconcerned about what he himself was really like. In a word, he was looking through the shell and crust of his outside into the vacant dusty chamber of his soul.

His attitude toward others was also changed. Six months before he had viewed Maitland as a mere youngster—an unimportant underling of Pepperill's, who "cut no particular ice" and whom he could patronize as he chose; to-day his attitude was quite the reverse. He saw that Maitland was his superior in every way and he was ready frankly to acknowledge it. The boy was true, and he was false.

He was no philosopher, always remarking with an air of complacency that he didn't even understand the *lingo*, but now, for the first time, his mind began seriously to dwell upon ideas rather than things—because those ideas had a vital application to him and his. "It's something born in you!" he said to himself as he walked up Broadway. "And if you haven't got it——!"

He wondered whether if "it" wasn't born in you, it was possible to acquire "it"—and pass "it" on to your children. He almost wished he was going to change his social status, cease to belong to the army of the prosperous. Tackle life all over again and see how heavily he would score. No, it was too late. He'd had his chance and lost it—had fozzled life completely.

Yet he had done pretty nearly what Peter B. had planned—followed his instructions—obeyed orders implicitly—and accomplished what the old man had hoped for. It was the fault of both of them. The old man could hardly be blamed for not having known

better. But he himself should have known better! He could not tell his father that, for that would be accusing his father, and his father wouldn't understand it, anyway. No, so far as the old man was concerned he would have to play the game and confess failure: "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight and am no more ~~worthy~~ to be called thy son." It made him laugh ironically—the idea of that deception!

Suppose he should go in and say, as he truthfully might: "Well, dad, I've lost my job—I'm down and out—busted—done for! But it's largely your fault, because you taught me that the only purpose of the game was to make money. For forty years I've spent all my energy, all my time, all my brains on that, and now the money is gone, there's nothing left—not a damn thing!" The old man would think him crazy, of course. Wouldn't have an idea of what he was talking about!

Poor old pirate! What a shame he had to be told. Just at the moment when he was so happy with his great-grandchildren! And Elizabeth—she'd certainly make a scene! A woman as old as that got so set in her ways. Not that she would really have to change her mode of life, but she would think that she would. She'd still be in the motor class. They'd have a million—maybe a little more. Simply have to give up Northampton in the summer for a less expensive place. And thank God for it!

But it would hurt his father to have to move out of the house. It would hurt him badly—for in the old man's mind the house stood for everything that he had in life. All his dreams, all his ambitions for himself and his family after him. Besides, it didn't do to move old people. They were apt not to last long afterward. It was a shame!

A swelling rose in his throat as he came in sight of the house. A shame! The old fellow at that very moment, probably, was sitting up there on the top floor smoking his pipe, after cooking his own supper and playing a game of checkers with Uncle Billy McGaw or with Sheila—perfectly contented and happy. What would he say? He'd think his son had done something crooked! Old people were suspicious. It might break his heart.

The tears smarted in his eyes as he winked them back, ashamed to use his handkerchief for that purpose. He knew that the old man's heart was the dearest thing in his whole life, and that beside his love for his father his love for his children was small indeed. He wondered why. Could it be that there had always been a barrier between him and them? The barrier reared of his own neglect? Of his own insincerity? The barrier erected by the knowledge that he had not been true to them?

The nearer Rufus approached to his home, which must needs be sacrificed, the more fearful he became as to the effect the disclosure he was about to make might have upon his father. It struck him—as he approached the corner upon which he had lived for so many busy years, where his children had all been born, where one of them had been married, and where his personal life had centred—it struck him as peculiar that this house of his did not mean more to him, that he was not more familiar with it and its appearance outside and inside. Come to think of it, he had never paid any particular attention to its appearance. Had taken it for granted, as it were. Beyond the fact that it was rectangular, four stories high, of brownstone, with some patches of red brick and here and there a panel or entablature of wreaths and flowers, he could not have described it to save his life.

There were steps, of course; and a heavy brownstone

balustrade; but he could not have stated more if his life had been at stake. A queer thing! And it was the same way with the inside. He knew the general plan, yes. Could recall the hall, the dining-room and library and his own bedroom; but the rest of the house—except the top floor where his father lived with Uncle Billy—was almost a blank to him.

How was this possible? Was it because he had never really lived in that house at all? Was it because his life had been all down-town, in Wall Street? "For where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also!" And his treasure was all down-town. No, his heart had not been in this brownstone house.

Now it took on a new interest for him. He might have had so much pleasure out of it—out of his up-town life—if he hadn't focussed all his attention on his down-town life. Even at his own dinner table he had been always thinking about business, although he carefully refrained from discussing it with his wife and daughters, as if it were too sacred a subject to be profaned by domestic talk. Frankly, this house had been nothing more than a hotel to him—a hall bedroom where he slept. Suppose the old man had foreseen all this, would he have built it? Rufus thanked God in his heart that his father had not foreseen. Most blessed of all limitations—the inability to know the future!

The humidity, the reeking atmosphere, added to Rufus's weariness. His shoulders were hunched a little as he walked along, grasping his unrolled umbrella in the middle; he looked worried and old. Even his clothes—the carefully cut black overcoat with silk lapels, the sharply creased trousers, the smoothly brushed derby hat that always looked a little too large for him—had lost their spruceness.

It had been drizzling all day, the clouds lying low and ominous, giving the tall buildings the effect of hills hung with mist; and the sidewalks were wet, with wide, slow-draining pools upon the crossings. Ahead of him—up by the Park somewhere—a narrow blue strip showed beneath the bank of wind-torn cumulus. A velvet wind, beneath which one felt an icy claw, whisked out of a side street and yanked his coat-tails. There was a “lift” in the air. People bent to the April flurry.

The blue band widened, deepening into an aperture of unfathomable opalescence. The edges of the overhanging fog-bank smoked with writhing wisps of gold. A magic beam of red shot from the west and tipped the gilded weather cock on the tower of the Heckscher Building a half-mile above him at Fifty-seventh Street. Then the clouds dissolved. The universe went blue. The white shafts, the corniced roofs, the chimneys, all the canyon tops, swam in a dazzling flood of rose.

Rufus raised his eyes to the glory. They rested upon his own roof, illuminated as by a crimson spot-light. He had never observed it before under such auspices. He winked and looked again. A man—two men!—were sitting cross-legged up there—on two of the chimneys. He stopped and put on his glasses. A tramp, a ragged little girl, a salesman, and a young couple out for a walk also stopped out of curiosity. He remembered the figures now well enough. They had always been there. A fancy of the architect’s! There was old Howlett himself, in smock and tam, sitting in effigy, smiling, chin in cupped hand, and gazing down upon his work; and opposite—watching him, it seemed to Rufus, with a malicious, mocking grin—was a naked horned devil, his forked-tail swung over his shoulder. They had been sitting there for the last forty years! And few the wiser.

Hardly anybody ever noticed them from the street. He had almost forgotten that they were there.

Funny old bird, Howlett! But it was a bit uncanny. He did not like to think that that devil had been sitting there all the time almost within reach of his old father—with only the roof between them. And right over his own head! The devil laughing at the architect—the architect laughing at the owner. Well, architects always laughed at owners. He straightened out the frown into which his features had unconsciously drawn and started on.

“I say, guv’nor,” wheezed the tramp slouching along beside him, “cairn’t yer help a poor feller to a bite?”

Rufus handed him what change he had. The salesman nodded good-naturedly as he passed them.

“Funny thing—those two up there!” he remarked.

The eerie sensation he had experienced lingered with him as he climbed the steps and rang the bell. He always made a point of ringing the bell instead of using his key, the better to keep the servants on their job. No, he’d had no luck living there.

An old couplet floated in his memory:

“For there’s nae luck about the house,
There’s nae luck at a’!”

He forgot that it ended “when our gudeman’s awa’.” Yet it would have been just as apposite—Rufus had always been away.

Anyhow, it was his house—even if it had never had for him the quality of a home—and he was used to it, just as he was used to Elizabeth, even if she wasn’t much of a wife. Too bad!

Jarmon opened the door, inclining himself deferentially, and Rufus stepped across the threshold into the

heavy upholstered atmosphere of the front hall. Somehow he always fancied that he could detect just a suggestion of moth-balls. A strange hat and coat were lying on the table.

"Mr. Devereaux is waiting to see you, sir. I showed him into the library."

Kayne raised his eyebrows.

What could Devereaux be calling about?

"Tell him I have come in and will be with him in a moment." He let Jarmon help him off with his coat.

"I'm in for dinner to-night. Tell Mrs. Kayne."

"Yes, sir. Very good, sir."

"Are my daughters dining in?"

"Yes, sir. That is, Lady Harrowdale is—and Miss Kayne. Miss Sheila is away."

"Well. Take my message to Mr. Devereaux."

Rufus turned into a small room leading off the hall while Jarmon plodded up the stairs.

What had brought Devereaux there? He had never called before. Never called anywhere. It must be something of importance. Perhaps—perhaps he had come to offer his help! Wouldn't that make a difference in the whole aspect of the thing? If a man voluntarily offered you money, it wasn't at all the same as asking him for it. He breathed rapidly, standing in the shadowy reception-room. By George! A way out. Well, he must wait and see. One thing sure, he must not turn anything like that down offhand. He walked to the elevator, mopping his forehead with a large silk handkerchief. The ride up cooled him off. A tall figure was standing at the window.

"Mr. Devereaux?"

The figure turned quickly.

"How do you do, sir!"

There was no suggestion of embarrassment or self-consciousness. His tone was respectful—deferential even.

“Won’t you sit down? Have a cigar?”

“I’ll smoke a cigarette if you don’t mind.”

“A whiskey and soda?”

“No, thanks.”

The two sank into opposite chairs, Rufus reaching first for a cigar from the small humidor on the adjacent table.

“Mr. Kayne,” began Devereaux, “I have come here this afternoon partly to express my regret at the action of the directors, which I regard as unnecessarily severe, and partly to attempt to rectify their mistake or, at any rate, to mitigate the harshness of their exaction. Of course I don’t know anything in detail about your affairs, but a million dollars is something of an amount to raise in these days without good security.”

Rufus gripped his cigar tight between his lips to conceal his excitement.

“I took the trouble to have those two indorsers looked up, and I’m sorry to say that I don’t see a chance of your getting anything from them. No doubt you’ve already found out the same thing for yourself. Now, what I really called to say is that, if this demand of the board that you assume the Alpha-Omega notes is going to embarrass you, I think I know a bank which, it so happens, might loan you the money—even without the ordinary sort of security.”

He spoke simply, with no suggestion that what he proposed was in any way unusual; and his narrow, high-bred face, with its black hair brushed straight back from the forehead, seemed to Kayne quite the most amiable, sympathetic, and handsome that he had ever seen. He saw he had done Devereaux a great injustice

in thinking of him as a snob—or a fellow who put on dog. He now ascribed the millionaire's previous aloofness to the difference in their ages. Whatever he did about Devereaux's offer, he was glad it had been made.

A warm-hearted, generous act! Its acceptance would save the situation, render it unnecessary for him to disclose his disgrace to the old man upstairs, enable the family to maintain its social prestige. What a pity it couldn't be accepted! Must it be refused, after all? The vision of the feeble old man up there on the top floor came to him—tottering around his cabinet of specimens. Didn't he owe it to him to keep the roof over his head no matter on what terms? It was the pirate's house—not his own, except in form. He opened his mouth to speak—and closed it again. The silence had become awkward.

The light had faded from the sky-line and the room had become quite dark where the outlines of the furniture bulked black against the windows. He ran two fingers part way round his collar. His last chance. Last call to save his old dad and his house. And then he suddenly straightened in his chair. Why was Devereaux offering to do this thing? A man didn't hand around a million dollars just out of amiability! Suppose Devereaux *was* in love with Diana? By George! Suppose he wanted to marry her? There would be nothing objectionable in taking a loan from a prospective son-in-law. Perhaps he had never proposed to her—was going to ask for her hand now. Why not? Something—the smoke of his cigar—made Rufus cough. In that case—everything would be all right! Smooth sailing forevermore! With Devereaux for a son-in-law—success assured! He must give him a chance to speak before he threw away such an opportunity as this!

"I—really—" he said, never having felt more awkward. "This is totally unexpected—more than generous of you."

Devereaux made a belittling gesture with his cigarette.

"There's nothing particularly generous about it," he returned. "Of course I assume you're in a position to secure the loan somehow. It's an accommodation—but there's no risk—the kind of thing that any man who could would be glad to do for a friend."

For a friend! Rufus drew heavily on his cigar. Once more he was the man of business—studying his next move. Slowly feeling his way he said:

"I am delighted that you regard me in that light."

"Then I hope you will let me to do you this slight service?"

Rufus broke his cigar-ash against the handle of a bronze receiver.

"I am most grateful, of course," he temporized. "But I really don't know why you should offer to do this for me."

"Simply on account of your daughter, sir," replied Devereaux.

Anybody could see the fellow was as straight as a string! There was no funny business between him and Diana. But if he were so fond of her, why didn't he marry her? Perhaps this was his way of going about it.

"Well, how are things there?" blundered Rufus hopefully.

Devereaux drew back, frowning.

"I don't understand you!" he answered coldly.

"Why, don't you see," stammered the banker, "if you were in love with my daughter and wanted to marry her—that would be one thing! Otherwise there wouldn't

be any adequate explanation— In a word, the business might be misinterpreted.”

“But I do want to marry her!” burst out Devereaux. “I’ve wanted to marry her for five years—and have asked her over and over again. But she won’t have me—says she doesn’t care for me that way!”

“In that case I can’t take your money!” declared Rufus. Then, as he thought of the old man upstairs, he gave way. “By gad, I wish she would marry you!” he groaned with real emotion.

An exclamation caused them to turn toward the door. Diana stood between the portières, one hand upon the electric push-button. It snapped and the room leaped into light.

“Marry *whom*?” she demanded of them furiously.

Devereaux stepped forward, his hand outstretched.

“Good afternoon, Diana!” he greeted her. Rufus had turned away toward the fireplace. Diana, scornfully erect, kept her distance.

“I couldn’t help overhearing you. Jarmon said you were here, and I came to the door to see if you were nearly through talking to father. What’s all this about money and marrying? Tell me!” She stamped her foot.

“Don’t go off the handle, Diana,” protested her father. “It’s all simple enough! I’m a ruined man—lost my position, salary, and everything—got to sell this house over your grandfather’s head unless I can raise a lot of money inside of three weeks!”

“And you tried to get it from Larry? Oh, Father!”

“No! No!” interrupted Devereaux. “The idea was my own. I came here and made the suggestion voluntarily.”

“That’s God’s truth!” confirmed her father.

She focussed on each of them in turn a flash of suspicion.

"And did your suggestion include a proposal of marriage? Oh, Larry! Did you think you could buy my father?"

He stepped swiftly toward her and grasped her arms.

"Steady, Di!" he cried. "You know me too well to make a charge like that. I offered to lend your father a million dollars. He asked me why I did it. I said it was because I had always been fond of you and wanted to marry you. I also said that I knew it was no use but that it naturally made me wish to do him a good turn if I could. Then he said what you overheard."

"That's just how it was," echoed the banker. "Why are you always raising the devil and upsetting everything? Here we were having a perfectly friendly talk and in you come like an actress making a grand entrance and turn it into a scene for a theatre. Nothing's happened at all! Except that I'm smashed! I'd intended to break the news to you all to-night. Well, you've got it now. Maybe it'll do you good."

He leaned his elbow on the mantel and rested his head on his hand. Diana faced him.

"Let go of me, Larry! How did you lose your money, father?"

"I guaranteed some notes that turned out no good."

"Whose?"

"Your friends—'Al' Stein and 'Tad' Savoy."

She spread her hands.

"No wonder you're ruined!"

"But your father is being made to suffer unduly—he is being penalized for a perfectly honest and well-intentioned business action," explained Devereaux. "He has been forced to resign his position and required to

take up the notes, besides. I'm on the board that has made this demand, and I feel it my duty to assist him to find the money."

"How much?"

"A million."

Diana shook her head defiantly.

"No, Larry! Not on your life! Father has made his bed—we all have—now let us lie in it! I'm glad the money's gone. What good has it been? What's the good of this house? What's the good of any of us? All we do is to eat and sleep and buy clothes and amuse ourselves—except father, and all he does is to earn the money so we can eat and sleep and play. I'm tired of this house and I'm tired of our sort of life. It would be a good thing if we all of us had to work. We're too soft! No, Larry! Leave us alone! The house is too old, the timbers are decayed, the dry-rot is on the beams, it's going to collapse—let it go!"

Rufus was staring at her fixedly. Devereaux took her hand as it hung at her side.

"I'm afraid this has upset you, dear. Good night, Mr. Kayne. Think my offer over. There's plenty of time."

He pressed her hand, holding it for a moment, and then stepped past her to the stairs. She watched him pathetically, hating to have him go. After all, he had done a fine and chivalrous thing in making his offer to her father, and she had treated him as if he had been the bearer of an insult. She could not let him go like that.

"Larry! Larry!" she called.

He was just going out the door as she ran down the stairs. He stepped back.

"What is it, Di?" he asked.

"I want to tell you something," she said, dragging him toward the small reception-room, which, like the hall, was not lighted.

"Well?" he said, as she led him into the bay window, where Jarmon could not see them.

"It's just that you're a dear!" she whispered, and putting her arms around his neck she drew down his head and kissed him.

They stood there thus for several seconds, their shadows merged into a single outline upon the curtain of the middle window—long enough for Maitland, who was just coming up the front steps with the codicil to Rufus's will which they had forgotten to execute in his pocket, to have the silhouette branded upon his vision. Without carrying out his errand, he turned on his heel and descended to the sidewalk.

But this time what he had seen did not merely arouse in him an inexplicable sense of personal injury. Rather, it filled him with blank despair. Now he knew that he loved Diana—as she was—whatever she was! Too late. There was no mistaking the scene inside the window. The house of Kayne would not fall with the Devereaux millions behind it.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE DEVIL AND THE ARCHITECT

RUFUS stood gazing stupidly through the portières. Put his foot in it again, had he? And for the same reason! Couldn't he ever stick to a course of conduct? If not, what chance of success had he? "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel!" But why should he be unstable? How foolish of him to be diverted—to weaken that way. Those two roosting upon the roof, had they put a curse on him, on the house! No wonder they wore those ironical grins. Anyway, he'd broken the news to Diana. The worst was over. The rest would be comparatively easy.

He threw his cigar into the fireplace and pressed the bell. Jarmon appeared.

"Where is Mrs. Kayne?"

"I think she's upstairs in her room, sir."

"How many to dinner?"

"Only you and the madam, sir."

Rufus looked at him inquiringly.

"How's that? Isn't Lady Harrowdale at home?"

"She sent word she's not comin' down, sir."

"But the others?"

"Miss Diana 'as just gone out again, sir. Said she wouldn't be back. And Miss Sheila 'as gone away."

"Where?"

"I don't know, sir; she didn't say. She went day before yesterday."

Rufus, still staring at Jarmon, grunted.

"Yes, sir," said Jarmon. "Anything more, sir?"

"No," answered Rufus. There you were! A great sort of a home—nobody ever in! Was that why those two were grinning so up there on the roof? Had old Howlett known how it was going to be when he had built the house? Who had built it? Old Howlett or that other; the one with the tail and the shrouded, bat-like wings? What was he doing up there, cross-legged on the chimney? It was a damned outrage on Howlett's part! A thing like that might have an influence, you never could tell. A damned outrage! The room seemed unconscionably hot. Automatically he put his handkerchief to his face and wiped off a slight film of dew that had gathered about his lips. He had had a bad day. The Krabfleisch business had taken the guts out of him. His path to the door was slightly irregular.

"Jarmon!" he called over the banister. "Get me a glass of Scotch."

He tossed it off while the butler waited to take away the empty glass.

"Is there an axe in the house?"

"A *what*, sir!"

Jarmon seemed to take the inquiry as a personal affront.

"An axe—or a hatchet?"

"I think William 'as an 'atchet, sir. In the cellar."

"Well, bring it up here."

He put the glass down on the tray with a bang.

"Do you wish it 'ere, sir?" incredulously.

"I said 'here'!"

"Very good, sir."

Jarmon withdrew with an air of protest. Expect him to go down into the cellar, did they? It was a bit thick!

However, he reappeared shortly holding the hatchet wrapped in a newspaper before him in both hands.

"All right!" said Rufus. "That's all!"

He had acted on impulse in sending Jarmon for the hatchet. Now that it was there—actually in his grasp—the impulse was even stronger. A damned outrage! Lucky he hadn't had it when Krabfleisch was in his office. An immense indignation possessed him against Howlett. The elevator groaned and scraped as it bore him upward to the unaccustomed penthouse on the roof containing its complicated machinery; and it refused to go the full distance. Rufus had to step up seven or eight inches. The lock on the penthouse door was rusty, and at first he was afraid he could not manage it. Then unexpectedly the key turned. He forced the heavy door open with his shoulder amid a shower of dislodged particles of dust, and stepped out upon the grimy tin-covered roof.

He paused, amazed at the beauty of the city blazing below him. The wind had died. The heavens were coruscated with stars. A hidden war-ship on the Hudson was feeling for a constellation with wavering antennæ. Times Square glowed like a bonfire. All about him rose strange bulwarks, tanks, ventilators, chimneys. Funny place, like the unfrequented top deck of an ocean liner!

He closed the door of the penthouse behind him, carefully adjusting the elevator so that he would not be left there stranded. He had never been up there before, and it seemed to him a terrific height above the street. Very dirty! An old broom, black and half rubbed away, lay at his feet, the only sign of human attention. Cautiously—self-consciously, his eye searched for the two figures. There was no difficulty about find-

ing them. Enormous, they were! Pretty human, they looked, when you got right up to them! The one of Howlett, especially!

He walked around the statue of the architect, gripping the hatchet tightly. But a curious feeling of taking an unfair advantage held him back. Some atavistic reverberation—or the lifelike pose—momentarily persuaded him that it was Howlett—or part of him. He could not bring himself to strike the defenseless image. After all, Howlett had not meant any harm and he was dead—long ago. Hatchet in hand, he walked to the other side of the roof, looking for Satan. Suddenly the search-light in its sweep around the horizon caught the roof, and the statue fairly leaped at him, its features distorted in a mocking, reddish grin. There it sat, chin in hand, with its forked tail cocked over its shoulder, leering straight at him. Howlett's silent partner! The full glare of the search-light turned the statue to fire.

Below lay the purple city like an imperial courtesan, the bridges and avenues looped like pearls upon its bosom, its squares and parks flashing like great golden brooches, its towers like diamond pendants. In all directions delicate traceries of light led like a phantasmagorical web into the efflorescent night. The Empire of the Children of Darkness! Rufus scowled back at the image. The left arm was extended downward, the hand pointing earthward—toward the city. He followed the finger. Yes, it was pointing toward the seething conflagration of Times Square. It burned there beyond the housetops like a great sulphurous pit, and the steam rising about it heightened the demoniac resemblance. "All these things will I give thee, if——!"

Rufus struck the statue in the face with all his strength.

"Damn you!" he cried hysterically, half blinded by the search-light.

Pieces of stone flew about him and one hit him on the cheek. A second blow and the devil's jaw together with the dependent right hand broke off and fell, leaving only the upper portion of the face still attached to the over-arching wings, its eyebrows curved in fatuous astonishment. Against the screen of the sky the search-light played for a second or two upon the figure of a stout man frenziedly attacking a statue with an axe, then swept on. But Rufus continued to belabor the statue in the darkness until it was but a shapeless mass, resembling a snow-image after a February thaw.

He descended in the elevator badly winded and reeking with sweat to the door of his wife's room and knocked. He had not entered it for months. Elizabeth in her chemise before her dressing-table was brushing her hair. Thinking his knock to be that of her maid, she answered "Come in." Each looked grotesque to the other.

"Why, Rufus!" she exclaimed. "What on earth have you been doing with that hatchet! Is anything the matter?"

Rufus gazed stupidly at the implement in his hand.

"Oh, nothing!" he replied vaguely.

"You've got blood on your cheek!" she insisted, becoming a little frightened. "Don't keep anything from me!"

He laid the hatchet on the hearth.

"I was up poking around on the roof."

"I don't see why you needed an axe for that!"

He threw himself into a Louis-Quinze armchair upholstered in light blue.

"Oh, I just took it along," he answered. "Look here, Elizabeth. I've got something I want to tell you."

His wife, who had kept on with her hair while they had been talking, gave it a final twist and sat down on the chaise longue.

"I know—" she began quickly.

"No, you don't know!" he retorted. "Nobody knows—that is no one in the family except Diana—and I've only just told her. I want you to be brave about it."

She had turned pale and stretched out her hand.

"I know more than you think! But why Sheila——"

"Have you seen Diana?" he interrupted.

"Not since lunch."

"Then you don't know—anything about this, at any rate! See here, Elizabeth! It isn't anything so terrible. Nobody's dead or anything like that. It's just that I've lost my position and a lot of money besides."

Her expression did not change. She seemed curiously preoccupied.

"Is that all?" she asked calmly.

"Isn't that enough?"

"How much money have you lost?"

"Oh, a million."

"Is that very much?"

He burst out laughing.

"Some people would think so."

"Well," she said. "Of course I know it's a lot of money, but you've got a great deal more than that, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes. But we'll have to sell this house."

There was a pause.

"I don't care so very much," she remarked in a detached way. "A house isn't everything."

"You bet it isn't!" he agreed. "A house isn't worth anything unless there's something inside of it to make it so."

"I'm sorry if you have lost your position!" she continued sympathetically. "But of course you can easily get another—a man of your reputation."

"But don't you really mind giving up the house?" he persisted. "After all these years?"

"Why, no!" she answered. "We can find another house. I'm rather tired of entertaining the same people over and over again. You know, Rufus, I don't think the smart people go out nearly so much as they used to—not nearly so much. And our girls have all been introduced to society. I'm not sure I'd not just as leave have an apartment—one of those new ones up on Park Avenue above Sixtieth Street. Park is getting quite fashionable. Half my friends are up there. It would be very convenient for my bridge."

Rufus felt a pang of contrition which, in his over-emotional condition, was enough to make his eyes water. After all, she was a good sport—this old wife of his! No need to worry about her having courage! The mother of his children, she had been loyal to him for a quarter of a century! What had she got out of it except bridge? He'd hardly paid any attention to her existence at all! A pretty rough deal she'd had! And when he came right down to it, she was the nearest human being to him in the world. Whatever she was, she was his! And he was hers! They had no one else. He experienced a profound pity for both of them—himself and her. Something trembled inside his jowls. Poor old Liz!

He got up awkwardly, went over to where she sat and put his arm around her.

"Lizzie," he said, "I'm sorry if I've not been all I should be to you. I'm afraid I haven't been much of a husband, my dear."

Her face quivered. He had not spoken to her like that for years.

"Why, Rufus!" she assured him. "You've been a perfectly wonderful husband! No two people could possibly have been happier."

"Yes! Yes! That's so!" he said hastily, staggered by her reply. He kissed her on the cheek.

"Oh, Rufus!" she exclaimed, blushing faintly. "Poor dear! You're all covered with dust! Why don't you go and take a nice hot bath before dinner?"

CHAPTER XXVII

"MORE MATTER FOR A MAY MORNING"

RUFUS decided not to tell his father about the house that evening lest it prevent his getting a proper night's sleep. The morning would do exactly as well. For the same reason Mrs. Kayne forbore to tell her husband what was on her mind—the insufficiently explained departure of Sheila.

Nevertheless, the old pirate got little sleep that night. The great event to take place upon the morrow would have kept him awake anyway. For how can an old gentleman of eighty-one who is giving a May-party be expected to sleep the night before? Particularly if it is his first? And this was to be a grand affair. With a recrudescence of his old powers of organization the pirate had conceived the idea of amalgamating all the different individual and separate parties that occur in Central Park upon May Day into one great, glorious, harmonious festival and frolic, in which he and Uncle Billy should participate as managers, directors, and patron saints. Sitting with their pipes in the Ramble, the two old fellows for days had studied the scheme with care from every angle until no item, physical or psychological, had been overlooked.

Only one objection had presented itself—the fact that whereas each May-party usually had its own queen, their proposed amalgamation or May-party trust would afford opportunity for but one. They solved it by deciding to have no single official queen, but to let all the

queens assemble together under the May-pole and officiate there in a body. Again they had observed that much unhappiness arose out of the inequality in the character and quantity of the lunches which the children ordinarily brought. Antonio Spaloni might proudly appear with a dozen half-ripe bananas, and Hans Fursen with a beautiful piece of cheese, but inevitably each wanted what the other had brought, and what is the "valuta" between bananas and cheese? Therefore, the pirate decided that he would furnish a regular lunch for all of them—two thousand sandwiches, two thousand pieces of cake, thirty gallons of milk, a wagon-load of ice-cream, etc., and, what was much more important, the pony-carts and donkeys would run free up and down the Mall all day and every child might have at least one ride and perhaps another if there was time. In addition, there would be a Scotch piper with his bags as well as an artist upon the accordion, a Punch and Judy show, a marionette theatre and a conjurer—and prizes for the prettiest decorations.

Some of it, to be sure, was wholly in violation of the rules laid down by the Park Commission against the introduction of "pedlers, beggars, and musicians," or the "setting up of tents, booths, or other structures for the giving of plays or games," but any policeman in the Park would have sacrificed his job rather than interfere. Indeed, it is to be suspected that the commissioner knew a great deal more about what was going to happen than his associates suspected. Anyhow, everybody else did. Not a child on the east side of Third Avenue but knew weeks in advance that "Uncle Peter" and "Uncle Billy" were going to have a May-party to which all the world was invited—irrespective of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

They sat excitedly discussing every detail until long after midnight. Would the Punch and Judy man surely be over from Brooklyn? Hadn't they better order the ice-cream wagon a half-hour earlier so as to be sure it would be there on time? Suppose it rained? Suppose it rained only a little? There must be a special man to look after the children who wanted donkey-rides! How about those cocoanut-cakes? Was five hundred enough? Where was "Accordion Jo" to meet them?

The pirate had asked constantly the last day or two for Sheila, for he naturally wished her to be at his party; but to his intense disappointment he was informed that she had gone away on a visit and was not expected back in time to participate in the festivity. This tinged his preparations with sadness. It was not enough that Claudia with little Peter and Bess would be there. Sheila ought not to have gone away without telling him! He had come to rely upon her companionship more and more, particularly as he was beginning to be conscious of a certain lack of elasticity in his old bones. He didn't have the "go-at-ive-ness" he used to, he told her. Sheila had enough "go-at-ive-ness" for an army. No! Sheila should have told him that she was going away. It cast a shadow!

He was up with the first streak of daylight, pottering around and boiling water for the coffee. Uncle Billy, more lethargic, was still asleep when Peter B. waked him at six-thirty for breakfast—toast, marmalade, scrambled eggs and bacon, and strawberries out of the ice-box. The old man was much excited, and had already tired himself with his worrying, and Billy made him sit down and smoke for an hour after they had put away the breakfast things.

"Sheila'd ought to be here!" Peter B. kept saying over and over.

"Well, maybe she'll turn up in time!" Billy would encourage him.

But the pirate would shake his great white mane and repeat resignedly:

"She oughtn't to have gone! 'Twarn't right for her to go without tellin' me!"

By eight o'clock the two old codgers were ready, each with a Panama, a frisky pocket handkerchief, and a bamboo cane—two "Champagne Charlies," as the pirate, brightening for a moment, said. The fact that it was a fine day and the thought of all the gladness it was going to bring to the little children partly compensated for Sheila's absence. Anyhow, it was his fault, he should have told her about it sooner. Too bad she was going to miss seeing their enjoyment. However—! But there was an ache in his heart.

The asphalt of the street was still wet as they came down the brownstone steps, for the sun had not yet risen high enough to dry it, and the air was cool and sweet. William, the second man, put them on the bus, smiling after the "pair of jolly old geezers." He liked old men. Made him think of his old gaffer back home.

Meanwhile, Rufus, exhausted after his nervous explosion of the night before, slept profoundly.

He did not awaken until after ten o'clock, and by the time he had breakfasted, bathed, and dressed it was nearly eleven. He had made up his mind that he would not go down-town that morning until he had broken the news to the pirate. It was going to be a hard job, but it had to be done; and until it was done his mind could not be free. But when he arrived up-stairs braced to carry out his purpose, the apartment on the top floor

was vacant—the two old men had already long since gone out.

From the second man Rufus learned that his father had gone with Uncle Billy to the Park, and forthwith started in pursuit of him. It would really be easier to talk to him there, anyway, he thought, out in the open air. Not so much like saying: “You’ve got to get out of this! The house—understand?” Much better! He had nothing to attend to in the way of business until after lunch, and Maitland was always there at the trust company. He decided to walk up to the Park. It would do him good, he was feeling lackadaisical—as if he needed exercise. His right arm, too, was strangely stiff. Afterward he could take the B. R. T. down to the office from Sixtieth Street and Fifth Avenue. So, receiving his straw hat and gray suède gloves from the valet, Kayne stepped forth from his house, a different man, both from the Utopia Trust Rufus that he had been six months ago and the Remsen Street Rufus of a half-century before.

He crossed to the shade of the opposite side of the Avenue, where there still lingered a cool dampness, before turning northward. There was no cloud anywhere. There had been a water-color in the Remsen Street house of a scene on the Ponte Vecchio—full of blues and brownish reds, and he recalled it vividly, not quite sure why he did so.

He had imagined that he could easily find his father, supposing that there would be comparatively few people in the Park in the morning. The old gentleman was usually hanging around the upper end of the Mall. But as he neared Fifty-ninth Street he noticed that the traffic was being held up to permit a procession of little children dressed all in white to cross the Avenue. May Day!

The Park would be jammed with children. Why hadn't he thought of it? He would never be able to find the old man!

At the head of the column four solemn young ladies of nine or ten were holding an improvised canopy, decorated with flowers and trailing garlands, over the head of a tiny girl just able to toddle along under her huge golden pasteboard crown. Behind the canopy shuffled a couple of hundred other infants, all crisply starched and immaculately white, their eyes large with anticipation. The sound of their little feet was like the never-ceasing lapping of wavelets upon rocks. Although the children sought to keep in line, the procession bobbed and bulged from side to side, undulating like a white sea-serpent, and when a gap fell in the line those behind came running up breathlessly. The processions came from all directions. For the Pied Piper was calling them.

As Rufus stood debating what to do, he heard the word "Father!" and looking up saw Claudia and the children sitting in one of the waiting motors. She beckoned to him and he walked out into the street and got in.

"Going to grandfather's May-party?" she asked.

"I didn't know he was giving a party," he replied as he tickled little Peter under the collar. "Nobody told me anything about it."

"He's been full of it for the last two days," she went on. "I hope he won't exhaust himself! When he once gets going——"

Rufus smiled.

"He can do more than any of us! Where is the party?"

"Up by the Casino in that big open space."

The end of the wavering line of white had reached the

opposite sidewalk, and the traffic moved on again. The chauffeur swung round the Sherman statue and into the Park. As far as Rufus could see the greensward was covered with groups of white-clad children. Up toward Seventy-second Street they were in such numbers that the ground looked as if it were strewn with gigantic apple-blossoms. The focus or apex of this congestion was a great pole wound with red and white ribbons and decked with streaming garlands held in the hands of scores of children who danced gaily around it. Already Peter and Bess were clamoring to be set down to join in the frolic.

“Where can your grandfather be?” exclaimed Rufus. “Suppose you look after the children and let me try to find him?”

The chauffeur had drawn up close to a balloon hawker, and Rufus lifted out the children and gave them some small change.

“Here,” he said, “buy yourselves some balloons. Don’t wait for me, Claudia.”

Beside the balloon man and the caterer’s assistants there was no man in sight other than Rufus himself. The acre or so of space usually dedicated to picnics was one huge mass of white. Children of every age sprawled and rolled on the grass, chased one another with shouts of joy or sat busily eating. The crowd around the Maypole was rivalled in density by another which struggled about a muscular youth in a white cap and apron who, with a big wooden spoon, was ladling out ice-cream from an immense can. The mothers sat or lay seemingly blissfully contented, as their offspring walked, ran, and fought over them. Over in the Mall the pony-wagons swayed and creaked under their swarming loads, and the donkeys stalked patiently and ceaselessly up and down carrying

little girls congealed with fearful happiness. Here and there groups of other children were playing games or dancing in a ring. It would have stirred a tougher heart than old Rufus's. All these children! Where had they ever come from?

He strolled slowly across the turf toward the May-pole. From beneath his feet rose to his nostrils the hot, moist smell of grass and earth. How soft and springy it was! He bent his knees; then lifted himself on the balls of his feet. He wasn't so old! Something made him want to laugh. Everywhere about him the twigs and boughs were covered with golden or reddish buds—here and there thrusting forth tiny, fanlike green fingers. Over by the wall the forsythia bloomed like a yellow bower and the Japanese quince made scarlet patches among the rocks. There was a smell like that of lilacs in the air. The ceaseless clatter of little tongues mingled with the drone and skirl of bagpipes. The earth seemed to yearn to reach up and draw down the dancing children to itself and kiss them.

There were myriads of tiny insects jigging about, pigeons flapped and strutted under one's feet, and in the elms of the Mall swung starlings and blackbirds—life everywhere. The fecund universe trembled and quivered to it, buzzed and hummed and whistled to it, danced and laughed and shouted to it. The earth was straining, bursting with it. The stale blood of the materialist flowed faster, tingling. The ice was melting. Fifty-five? He couldn't be fifty-five! He was no older than when he had married Elizabeth. These were not his grandchildren! There was no such thing as age. Look at his father! Eighty-one and spry as a grasshopper. Where was his father?

Between where he stood and the May-pole the Punch

and Judy and the marionette theatre had been set up, each conducting a continuous performance before an enthralled, gasping, and ever-changing audience. Farther away, in the isolation of superiority, the professor of legerdemain was busy squeezing guinea-pigs out of minute noses and filling the air with innumerable yards of parti-colored ribbon whisked from the mouths and ears of the infantile spectators. The sandwich man had long since been despoiled of all his wares. The cocoanut-cakes had vanished, the milk-cans been drained of their last drops. But the noise and hurly-burly kept on, the ground reverberated to the thumping of feet—perpetual motion everywhere. One could feel the life oozing up from the teeming ground and into the children. It was a frenzy of vitality.

He wormed himself through the crowds of children toward the May-pole, for his instinct told him that there in the very thick of it he should find his father. Brought thus into closer proximity, he noticed that many of the children had taken off their white dresses and hung them upon the trees in order not to soil them. Not a tree whose lower limbs did not blossom with this strange foliage. After all, Sunday was coming, and a dress was a dress, even if one was so small that to take it off left one comparatively naked.

Rufus, proceeding slowly to avoid accidents, at length reached the outer edge of the crowd about the May-pole, in the centre of which stood a dozen or more juvenile crowned heads gazing upon the scene with royal condescension. There too was the piper in full regalia playing frantically upon his pipes, and the instant he paused for breath “Accordion Jo” took up the refrain, while the circle of children danced and capered around them. Just inside the ring, holding a small negro boy by one

hand and a little Italian girl by the other, stood old Peter, hatless and in his shirt-sleeves.

Tears rose to Rufus's eyes. To interrupt his father at such a moment would be an unthinkable cruelty. There would be plenty of time later on. That evening perhaps—or, if the old man were tired, then to-morrow morning.

Claudia, with the two children had left the motor and gone over to watch the Punch and Judy; Rufus got in and ordered the chauffeur to take him to the subway. As they drove off he turned and looked back across the swarm of children. Between him and the May-pole he could see a motionless white spot that he knew was his father's head.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE END OF A CHAPTER

It was five o'clock and all the children had gone home. Some men were taking down the May-pole and rolling up the streamers, and the respective proprietors of the Punch and Judy and the miniature theatre were dismantling them and reducing them to bundles of boards which they tied up with rope. The ground was strewn with pasteboard boxes, torn newspapers, crushed lily-cups, wrappings of every sort—the débris of the party. Not a square yard but was littered with paper, and the grass itself was tousled in every direction from the erratic movements of the merrymakers. Where the air had been alive with the tumult of voices, the wheezing of the accordion, the whine of the bagpipes, and the raucous cries of Mr. Punch—"Crack! That's the way to do it!"—now brooded a startling silence—as if the conjurer, having swallowed his final rabbit, had waved his wand and they had vanished like pixies into the grass. Yet something of that intense, vibrant life seemed yet to hover there, charging the air with unseen pulsations. The pirate, sitting alone on a green bench, could still feel in his ears the vibration, hear the pounding of hundreds of little feet. He had been glad to sit down at last, although he did not feel exactly tired. Rather, he did not seem to have much feeling at all. Uncle Billy, mousing with his pipe around the remains of the marionette theatre, thought the old man had gone to

sleep—but Uncle Billy was mistaken. Old Peter was not asleep, although he was dreaming.

He sat erect and high—the Kaynes were all long-barrelled—his thin old legs crossed, his lean brown hands with their blue-black veins laid one athwart the other upon his knee. Through the boughs of the plane-tree studded with pea-green fronds of bursting buds above, the low sun dappled his Zeus-like hair and beard with patches of whiter light. Beneath the Panama his sunken eyes held a sad serenity, and in his pose there was a certain mild majesty.

Old Peter was just a shade bewildered. There had been so many children. So many! And they had darted about so quickly! They had tired his eyes. But not him—only his eyes. He half closed them. The air was sweet, surprisingly so—except for an occasional whiff of camel from the hutch at Sixty-sixth Street—and the fragrance that stole along the grass was more redolent of blossoms than in the morning's stabbing heat. He took several long breaths, in spite of a slight tightness in his chest. Oh, it was good! Good! Good to breathe and mingle the air with yourself—make it part of you, just as the earth was part of you and you were part of the earth. His eyelids sank lower. He wondered he did not feel more exhausted after such a long day. He had got up at five o'clock—twelve hours!

But it had been worth it! A wonderful party! Twelve hours was nothing! In the old days he had often worked longer than that with pick and shovel. That had been worth doing too! Life had been good to him. He had been very lucky—very happy. Everything had been worth having. Even, he admitted with a self-conscious chuckle, those wild days of the "Zarazota." It was all a part of life. He had no consciousness of

having done anybody any harm. In his heart of hearts he did not really regret anything now. As for the men he had smashed, whose fortunes he had wrecked—they could not bear him any ill will. It was part of the game. “Win or lose.” They had taken their chance when they had pushed in their stacks of chips. He had held the winning hand—that was all. A pretty good bunch! Most of them dead now, anyway. He wondered at it a little, feeling in himself no consciousness of age. No reason, he thought, why he should not be good for years yet. He was going strong at eighty-one. Even ninety was not so old. He recalled that his great-uncle had ridden horseback at a hundred and one, and had given it up then only because, as he said, it wasn’t exactly “seemly.”

The sun, dropping ever lower, wrapped a blanket of warmth about him. Yes, life was sweet at any age. It might be different if you were left alone, but he had so much! So much to enjoy! So much to be proud of! There never had been a better son, a finer man, than Rufus! His boy! What a contrast to that other—the smug, sanctimonious James! Rufus had shown ’em! Made a big man of himself. Walked away with everything! Respected throughout the land. Yes, sir! One of the leading financiers of the country. He had known the boy would make good and he had!

He would never have built the house if he had not known that Rufus would make good. The house! He remembered his first talk with Howlett about it. He had never really liked Howlett. He was too autocratic, too much of a swelled head, stuck on himself! “I want you should build me the best house you know how—latest type—solid—best material—something to last!” he had told him. Well, he had got it. There was noth-

ing finer in New York—and it would last, too! Long, long after he was gone—it would still be there. No one could want anything better. When little Peter was an old man—living maybe up on the top story just as he was now—his children's children would be going in and out, running up and down the stairs, and the megaphone men on the rubber-neck coaches would wave at it and say: "On your right is the magnificent residence of Peter Hargeth Kayne, the well-known banker, built in 1885 at a cost of a million dollars." His house! His family!

You'd travel a long way to find three girls like those granddaughters of his! He'd seen plenty of pretty women but never one to touch Diana! A beauty—yet a Kayne every inch of her. Just like his mother with her red hair and those slanting Chinese eyes and broad high cheek-bones. Funny how it cropped out in just one like that and skipped the rest! And Claudia—she took after the other, the Hargeth side—another lovely one. Poor girl—but with such wonderful children. What fun Peter and Bess had had! He could hardly get them away from the Punch and Judy. And Sheila! The dearest of all! Why hadn't she been there to share his happiness? But it wasn't her fault! Not her fault! He'd tell her about it that evening.

He closed his eyes for a moment the better to savor it all. Yes, he had had a good life—a fine, full life—and not over yet by any manner of means. Diana and Sheila would both be getting married presently—he'd have to see that they made no such mistake as Claudia. Peter and Bess—fifteen years or so more, and they would be getting married, too. And there would be other great-grandchildren coming along! Great great-grandchildren! Plenty to do! Plenty to be interested in. It kept

broadening out—broadening out—like a river—that swept you along—along——

The shadows from the Mall crept closer and closer—drawing a coverlet of partial obscurity over the refuse of the picnic. A robin ran toward him, struggled with an unseen worm, hesitated, and ventured nearer still; and three sparrows, perched on the bough above, seeing some crumbs on the bench beside him came fluttering down. Old Peter watched them out of the corner of his eye. One paused for a moment upon the toe of his congress shoe, and he felt its weight.

The sparrows, seized with a sudden impulse, flew away; the robin circled the bench and disappeared. Old Peter had been only half conscious of them. They were there, to be sure; but so now were the children who seemed to him to have come back. He could hear them babbling all about him—babbling, babbling. He opened his eyes a little wider. The evening breeze stirred the papers on the grass and sent some of them flying. Yes, there the children were—everywhere, all in white—all over the grass. He was glad they had come back. He had been lonely without them. Now it was all right. Their voices were getting louder all the time—rising higher and higher, drowning out everything, like the roar of waves. And throughout it all he seemed to hear the skirl of bagpipes—above his head somewhere. The wind swayed his whiskers gently to and fro. His eyes closed. Ladies passing by in their landaulet saw the old man at a distance and supposed him to be asleep. A gray squirrel—stultified with high living—came loping across the turf to exact his daily tribute of peanuts. He had seen this old man frequently. Leaping upon the bench, the squirrel nosed the remaining crumbs, spurned them, and then crept upon the pirate's extended arm.

Old Peter's eyes cracked again and, recognizing his visitor, his mustaches moved in a slight smile. He had noticed him many times before on account of his frayed, scraggy tail—bald like a rat's at the end. The squirrel nipped his finger and ran down his trouser leg to the ground.

It was distinctly cooler. The shadow had reached almost to the bench. He could no longer hear the voices of the children, and he perceived to his surprise that they had gone away again. Those white things were only pieces of paper! But there was no doubt that they had been there a moment ago. He had seen them distinctly. Children were all like that—here one second and gone the next! Sheila was just like that. His little Sheila—his “fairy moonbeam.” What a shame she could not have been there to see the children! Where was she? Where had she gone? Why had she not told him that she expected to be away? It was not like her. She was always so thoughtful—so sweet! He began to worry. Suddenly he became convinced that she was in danger. The children had come back again and the sound of their voices was like the shouting of the sea. They were pushing close about him, stretching out their hands—fear on their faces—and they were all in danger—terrible danger—and as he stared at them he saw that each one was Sheila—a thousand Sheilas—and each one dearer to him than anything else on earth. And above the roar of the sea which now poured all about him he could hear the skirl of the bagpipes—“The Campbells Are Coming—The Campbells Are Coming”—and then the sun set—suddenly—and darkness.

“Gently! Hold him like that!” he heard some one saying, and he opened one eye. It was still bright daylight. The sun had come back. There was a group of

people about him and he recognized Rufus and Uncle Billy. What were they worrying about? He tried to smile but he could not move his face. It seemed stiff—cramped. He tried to get up but his left arm and leg refused to budge. There was something the matter with his tongue. It made him angry. He wanted to tell them about Sheila. What were they waiting for? Why were all those motors stopping just there, with their staring occupants? His brain ordered his defiant muscles to wave them on, without result. Why did they not move on? They were very impolite. From the distant avenue came a faint clanging which grew louder and then louder. Then some one hit the gong a vicious penultimate stroke right beside him. He was furious at his own futility. And then—crowning insult!—he felt the bench with himself upon it being lifted in air and carried toward the motors.

He remembered little of his trip home, or of how he got up the front steps of the house and into his bed. But his sense of relief at being once more surrounded by his own personal effects was great. It was such a comfort to feel that he was back home—in his own house—with his family. Everybody was there—Rufus, Elizabeth, Billy, Diana, Claudia, even that fool James—everybody except Sheila. He endeavored to communicate to them the important fact that she was in danger, but his mouth gave forth only a succession of meaningless sounds. Disgusted he gave up trying. Then a long time passed during which—so far as he was aware—nothing happened at all.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE BUTTERFLY CLUB

It is probable that both Elizabeth and Diana would have been more dismayed by Rufus's disclosure of his misfortunes had not their minds been distracted by Sheila's mysterious departure, of which they had first learned when Diana, returning home the previous afternoon, had found a pencilled note in her sister's handwriting telling her that she was going down to spend a few days at Doctor Dhal's Butterfly Club. This discovery coming so shortly after Diana's talk with Sheila and the latter's expressed willingness to abandon Dhal and all his works was to that extent the more appalling. That, as Sheila had said in her note, Lulie Wingate, Rita Ricardo, Oscar Florian, and others equally conspicuous were also down there did not assuage her anxiety. Diana had formed an intense distaste for Mr. Oscar Florian ever since he had appeared at the last artist's festival clad in a lion skin and with his legs gilded.

She had given up her own studio long ago, finding no attraction in subdued lights, low music, incense, decadent French verse, vermilion decorations, or the mysteries of Mahadeva. Florian and his associates were almost as antipathetic to her as Dhal himself. Rita Ricardo kept snakes and, indeed, there was, to Diana, something reptilian about all of them. This made her the more ready to believe all the implications in what Maitland had repeated to her about Dhal. But that

there was something unwholesome or worse about Doctor Dhal she had not needed Maitland to tell her.

She had communicated his information at once to Sheila, who had at first ridiculed it. The child had never, she assured Diana, felt half so well as since she had been taking the exercises at his sanitarium. They were perfectly simple—deep breathing, fresh air, a mild diet. Doctor Dhal himself was never there and the instruction was given entirely by young women. If it benefited her, what difference did it make whether it was called “Yogi” or anything else?

When Diana endeavored to explain, Sheila became indignant. She did not know what Diana was talking about. What she said was all nonsense! Why didn’t she go around there and find out for herself, instead of listening to a lot of silly gossip which was utterly false? It was horrid of Diana to suggest that there was anything about the exercises that was in the slightest degree undesirable. Diana assured her that she was quite satisfied that there was not. She could not understand the intense feeling of resentment which she seemed to have aroused in Sheila. Finally the girl promised to give it all up.

That had been six weeks before, and Diana had been lulled into a specious sense of security by Sheila’s apparent willingness to yield to her sister’s wishes. There was something ominous in the fact that Sheila had lied to her—must deliberately have broken her promise to her and have intended to do so all along. Some subtle influence must have undermined her normal standards of conduct. It was like finding that one’s sister had been associating with some one who had a contagious disease or had gone to stay in an infected house. At least Sheila had had the decency to let them know where

she was. Could the child have gone back to drugs again? But a search of Sheila's bureau and medicine-closet revealed nothing to suggest a resumption of the habit, if it could be called such. And her appearance for the last three months belied any such suggestion. Lying in a corner, where evidently Sheila had dropped and overlooked it, Diana found a curious cone-shaped object. It was round at the base and about five inches in diameter, made of brass wire twisted into a spiral and terminating in a crudely fashioned serpent's head. She recalled with a shudder having seen a similar object worn by a dancing-girl. Something far more dangerous and terrible was hanging over Sheila, gradually overpowering her senses—physical and moral—as with an anæsthetic. It was like death lurking in a flower, death borne on a sunlit breeze, death dancing to a joyous tune upon the grass, death in the kiss of a laughing child. What was inside this whited sepulchre into which Sheila had vanished?

Diana had telephoned Lloyd at once, but had found him neither at his office nor his rooms. It was in fact the moment when he had been on his way to the Kayne house with Rufus's will, which he was eventually to take away with him undelivered after seeing the tableau of Devereaux and Diana in the window. That telltale silhouette, following on the very heels of his talk with Rufus that afternoon, had confirmed his worst suspicions. Theretofore he had often lain awake at night tortured by the possibility of what he now accepted as a fact. There was no mistaking the abandon with which Diana had thrown herself into her lover's arms—no longer room for doubt that he was her lover. Devereaux wasn't "out of it"—after all. Why should he be? Let him pay for her! He had the money!

And yet for some perverse reason Lloyd knew that he loved her none the less himself—loved and hated her at the same time—refusing to face that which his reason told him must be the truth. Was instinct—the wider spiritual knowledge of his subconscious self—teaching him to question reason? Or was the great wave of his passion lifting him off his feet and carrying him bodily toward the rocks? A change had come over him. So far as this woman was concerned he would now have thrown conscience to the winds—while surrendering no other jot of his integrity. This emotion that now possessed him—this lust of Satan or thirst of the soul, whichever it may have been—had overcome his will, and had even bred a certain ruthlessness toward its object. He would bide his time. Perhaps she would tire of Devereaux. Then——?

But he was in no conciliatory mood when next morning Diana called him on the telephone, told him the news regarding Sheila, and asked for his advice. What did she take him for? he asked himself. Did she imagine that she could fool him about her relations with Devereaux and, while keeping him in suspense, use him to the limit? Rather gruffly he told her that she had better go to Jamaica, where the Butterfly Club was situated, and see if she couldn't persuade the child to return home with her. If she was unsuccessful, he'd see what could be done next. She could call him up again. Why, he demanded peremptorily, hadn't she kept track of what Sheila was doing? At least, enough to know whether or not she had been faithful to her promise? Diana could make no defense. There was none to make.

"Don't be cross with me!" she had begged.

"Why not?" he had answered brusquely. "I've a right to be! I'm furious with you!"

"But—I need you, Lloyd!"

"Well—!" he answered, slightly mollified. Then, in a sudden rush of sympathy for her, all his coldness melted away. "O, what's the use! I'm sorry I spoke that way. You know I didn't mean it!— I'll always be there when you want me—Diana!"

"Oh, Lloyd! Thank you! I know it!"

It had been too late to do anything that evening, and, accordingly, it was not until the next morning—that of May-Day—that Diana, shortly before her father had left the house for Central Park, started for Long Island. She drove herself, taking no chauffeur, and the exhilaration induced by the glory of the spring, and her swift flight through the soft green countryside, gradually allayed her fears. In this gorgeous, dazzling world of crystalline blue, of budding hillsides white with apple-blossom and dogwood, of fragrant air, of birds and flowers and sparkling sea, there could be no hidden menace! No wonder Sheila had wished to be in the country at such a moment.

She had looked up her route in the road-book before starting and, at a wooded corner by a duck-pond, left the turnpike for a sandy road leading toward the water. For a mile or so she traversed open fields, black and oozing with the rain of the afternoon before, then crossed a barren area sparsely covered with scrub-oak, and at length came unexpectedly upon a high brick wall surmounted by iron palings. Beside this wall the road ran for a hundred yards or more before plunging down a hill toward the Sound. Midway was a heavy door painted green with a small barred opening or peep-hole closed from within by a slide. On one side was an ordinary push-button marked "RING." There was no name or mark on the door save a "*swastika*" on the lintel above.

This was enough of a cue, and Diana, having parked her car on the other side of the road, pressed the bell, which after some delay was answered by a negro servant.

Through the door Diana could see an extensive lawn where a number of persons were playing tennis, basketball, battledore and shuttlecock, ringtoss and throwing a medicine-ball. The negro, on learning her errand, conducted her up the path toward a large yellow house with several additions and many windows. In a grove of trees farther up the hill behind the house were a number of bright-colored bungalows. Several women were walking about the piazzas in pink, blue, and purple kimonos. From inside came the insistent whine of a gramophone. The sunlight falling through the upstairs windows seemed to reflect as many different colors as there were in the kimonos, and Diana now observed that all the athletes had on black tights, over which they threw the wrappers when they were done playing. A pleasant-faced young woman dressed in a sort of bathing-suit de luxe came forward, shook hands with the visitor, and led her into a small, bare reception-room.

"I will try to find Miss Kayne for you," she said civilly. "She may be at one of the lectures. If not, she may have gone out walking."

A few moments later Sheila herself came in dressed in the street costume which she had worn when she had left New York.

"What have you followed me down here for?" she asked coldly, suffering Diana's kiss.

"To take you home."

"I'm not going home!" answered Sheila, moving toward the door by which she had entered.

Diana became angry.

"You promised me to give up all this!" she protested sharply.

Sheila's face remained expressionless. She did not reply.

"Mother is frightfully upset about your going away without saying anything to her. It was very inconsiderate of you—heartless, in fact. Please get your things and come at once. I have the motor outside."

Sheila shook her head. There was a look in her eyes that frightened Diana.

"I insist!"

Sheila tittered. The sound was harsh, uncanny. It drove everything from Diana's mind that she had purposed using as an argument with her sister, including their father's financial embarrassment, the loss of his position, the necessity of retrenchment.

"You've lied to me!" she cried furiously. "What has come over you! Have you gone back to taking drugs?"

Sheila's face, hitherto merely scornful and antagonistic, hardened. Turning her back upon her sister, she walked haughtily through the doorway.

"Sheila!" cried Diana, hurrying after her. "Sheila—dear! Oh, Sheila! Please come back!" But the child had vanished.

Diana, turning into the adjacent corridor, came face to face with Oscar Florian, arrayed in white trousers and sleeveless purple jersey. He exhaled an odor of *quelques fleurs*. There was something about the chubbiness of his chin, with its little pointed beard, and the whiteness of his arms that seemed positively indecent. To Diana he was more repulsive than ever.

"Ah!" he cried gaily, holding out a soft white hand with shiny nails. "Are we to have the pleasure of wel-

coming you to our circle? I understand your sister is here."

"How do you do?" said Diana rigidly. "Can you tell me if Doctor Dhal is in? I am anxious to see him."

Florian smiled as if something amused him and withdrew his hand.

"I will see," he answered with his old insolence. "Excuse my dishabille!"

Diana returned to the waiting-room and stood looking out of the window. What was behind all this? A terrible dread lest Sheila should be already lost possessed her. Her tension increased as the minutes passed. Unexpectedly a thick, oily voice close behind her said:

"Dear lady, what can I do for you?"

She had heard no one enter and the shock of hearing that sudden voice drove the blood from her face. She shrank back; then, overcoming her sensation of horror and disgust, faced about. Doctor Dhal was standing there in a gown of blue crash, a red sash about his waist, a bland smile upon his pasty face, his short arms dangling at his sides. Underneath one of them was tucked a red-covered book.

"Please tell my sister to come home with me!" she besought him.

"Does she not desire to remain?" he asked in apparent surprise.

"Her father and mother don't want her to stay. They didn't know that she was coming. They wish her to return at once," she said.

Dhal bowed.

"Dear lady, I will speak to her. She will, of course, go if she wishes. No one ever stays here unwillingly. All are as free as the air."

He spoke with such sincerity that Diana's feeling of

repugnance was somewhat weakened. Superficially, at least, the man was a gentleman.

"Will you not sit down?" he asked. He placed a chair for her and she sank into it. Coincidentally Doctor Dhal slid into another. He was looking into her eyes now—his glance never leaving them for an instant. She had been foolish to be afraid of this man!

"Are you sure your father and mother are correctly informed about what we teach here?" he asked in a kindly tone. "We are seeking only perfect health—'mens sana in corpore sano'—self-realization, perfect and harmonious development of body, mind, and soul. I should be glad to show you over our plant. It is the quintessence of democracy. Or to have your father and mother visit it. Before taking away your sister, would it not be well to do so? Our doctrines take a very firm hold upon those who study them. Much harm can be done by interruption. Sheila——"

The familiar use of her sister's Christian name by this stranger released Diana's will from any momentary ascendancy which his personality might have achieved over it. To hear those sensual lips uttering the word "Sheila" revived all her original loathing.

"I wish to take my sister away with me—now!" she answered definitely.

The sweetness of Doctor Dhal's smile faded, but his urbanity did not.

"Very well!" he answered with a bow. "Doubtless you have sufficient reasons. But it is a pity not to let her stay. She is very ductile! She is making great progress—and it is possible that she may not wish to go."

Doctor Dhal appeared to dissolve in a bluish mist and to be sucked through the doorway as by a draft. Diana

found herself alone again. The atmospheric pressure in the room had lightened; it seemed cooler, drier. She felt, after her two interviews, nervous, verging on tears. The Swami did not come back, but at the end of a quarter of an hour the young lady in the bathing-suit beamed in once more.

“Doctor Dhal wishes me to tell you that he has spoken to your sister and that she is unwilling to return to the city. Of course he has no way to make her do so.”

The room had become overwhelmingly hot again. Millions of motes floating in the sunlight seemed to obscure Diana's vision. She arose feeling faint. From the other side of the corridor came the rasping of somebody's famous ragtime orchestra accompanying a hoarse vibrant voice upon the gramophone—“All I want is a little bit of love! A little bit of love from you!”

CHAPTER XXX

"VI ET ARMIS!"

ON the elaborate dais of an ornate court-room five middle-aged gentlemen in black bombazine gowns sprawled in postures indicating respectively indifference, irritation, resentment, scorn, and coma. The one who would later write their joint opinion was listening, one—the last—was sleeping, one was wondering where the devil he could find an apartment for his mother, who insisted on moving to New York, and two were dreaming of the Garden City golf-course. In front of them stood a tall young man with a bald head.

"And so, as Your Honors will observe," he remarked, sweeping the half-circle for a possible gleam of response and then fixing his eye burningly upon the only one of his auditors who appeared in any way conscious of his presence, "as Your Honors cannot fail to have observed the analogy between *res adjudicata* and *stare decisis* sought to be drawn by my learned opponent, and upon which he has—er—permitted himself to become so eloquent—utterly falls to the ground. I submit unhesitatingly that the order should be affirmed." He bowed, picked up his papers from the table before him and returned to his chair.

The eyes of the listening judge followed him, unblinking as an alligator's. The judge in the centre came back from Garden City and, looking around the room vaguely, murmured: "Respondent?"

Maitland had been sitting in this luxurious legal conservatory since one o'clock waiting for his case to be reached, for it had been too late to secure an adjournment from the opposing counsel when Diana had telephoned. Through the drone of the arguments he had heard only her voice as it had come over the wire. “I need you! I need you!” She was waiting for him now in one of the rear rows of spectators, her car outside. There had been only a moment's opportunity to shake hands and assure her that at the earliest possible instant he would be with her. “*Res adjudicata!—Stare decisis!*” What were they when a human soul was fluttering nearer and nearer to the darting tongue of that moral python?

“Crutchfield & Pepperill?—Mr. Maitland?”

He heard the name and mechanically arose and made his way forward. As if his astral body were concealed somewhere behind a cornice, he could see himself bowing and hear his voice saying in the monotonous, slightly bored tone that it was the fashion to affect:

“If the Court please, I have listened to my learned adversary's argument with the closest attention and I am utterly at a loss to understand his inability to grasp what is the fundamental principle of law in this state. Ever since *Beadleston versus Boyle* in the Eighty-first New York—which, as you all remember, was later approved in *McGillicuddy versus Pettybone, ex rel. Swackhammer*,—the law has been definitely settled. What my learned friend calls an analogy with *stare decisis* IS *stare decisis*.”

The postures behind the dais had not altered. The listening judge leaned back his head and looked up at the chandelier as if in search of a possible “*stare decisis*” roosting among its candelabra. The apartment-hunt-

ing judge sank into even lower depths of gloom. There were no apartments to be had in New York! What a waste of time, thought Maitland! Nobody was paying any attention to him—nobody was listening to him. A matter of form. Eventually they would glance over the briefs, hear a few words from the judge selected to write the opinion, and “concur.” If that learned gentleman had had a lucky turn in the stock-market he might take one view, or if he had had too many cocktails the night before he might take another. But whatever view he took they would most of them “concur” just the same, because that was the obvious thing to do. And so was made the law—and out of the law grew morals, and standards and ideals for which men died. *Res adjudicata!* Things that had been *settled*. But by whom? What did this loyalty to the past amount to? The crimes of to-day were the virtues of to-morrow. A miscount in a ballot-box might mean a radically different moral code!

“Therefore,” he heard himself declaim with a dying fall, “while the dictum in Peapack versus Twelvetrees may show a momentary vacillation in the minds of the Court of Appeals as then constituted, the opinion in McGillicuddy ex rel. Swackhammer remains the law of the state.”

He bowed—five swivel chairs squeaked in a common relief, a distinguished-looking man, much more like a judge than any of the others, but who was only a clerk, arose and murmured: “Hear ye! Hear ye! This court stands adjourned until to-morrow at one o’clock!”—the assembled lawyers got up with an assumption of leisure and drifted slowly out conversing in low tones.

Lloyd gathered up his papers and followed. The pantomime was over; the masks thrown aside; the judges

were golfers again; the lawyers men! Instead of a lot of stuffed puppets talking a queer sort of gibberish, they had all become live people, breathing the fresh air of reality, not the dust-laden atmosphere of an artificial past.

Another moment and Diana and he were in the car, entangled in the traffic of Fourth Avenue, but with as yet no opportunity to relax the nervous tension induced in both of them by their suppressed excitement and the long delay. The face of the girl beside him was set; her eyes tortured; but she nevertheless drove with control. The great arms of the Queensboro Bridge spanned the twisting, uncoiling river with festoons of palely glowing lights. Ahead over the smoke of Long Island a snow-capped Bernese Oberland reared itself rose-pink in the afterglow. It faded to mauve, to gray, then disappeared. An interminable procession of red lights fled before them.

Neither spoke. She was longing to pour out her heart to him, to abase herself to him, to paint her dread of the invisible menace that threatened her sister. Once over the bridge she began to speak in detached, jerky sentences. Crouched at the wheel, her eyes fixed on the road, she recounted her experiences of the morning, sparing herself neither with regard to her neglect of Sheila in the past nor the stupidity of her last approach. She had, she admitted, been a prize fool all along. She held nothing back from him. Her unrestrained self-recrimination had almost the savor of a confession. He had never seen her like that. All her confidence—the pretty arrogance she used with Devereaux, Longwood, and their friends—had fallen from her. It was clear that she wanted him to know her exactly as she was.

Her helplessness, her dependency, touched him. That

she had called upon him in this way instead of upon Devereaux puzzled yet gratified him. He ceased to resent being made use of. Instead, he found himself oblivious of the purpose of their errand or the danger hanging over Sheila, to everything save that he was by her side. He exulted in the consciousness of her reliance upon him. Up to this time she had always seemed to him to be stronger than himself. It was an exquisite delight to feel that she needed him—no one else, only him!

Holding his hat-rim with one hand, he watched her driving through the night. Now and again his arm would touch hers, and once he was thrown sharply against her and felt the warmth of her body. What a contrast between this dash through the odoriferous darkness and his afternoon in the stuffy court-room! He tingled with a growing excitement. What were law or morals or anything else compared with life? "One crowded hour—!" Was he going to let it go for any fusty regard for traditional conventionalities acquired Heaven knows how or where? From McGillicuddy ex rel. Swackhammer and the like? He leaned toward her and he fancied that her arm returned his pressure. A strange, wild irresponsibility—utterly foreign to the calm, cool Maitland—took possession of him. She was his! What did it matter what she was, or had been, or done if he loved her? What did anything matter if she could be made to love him? Life!

They swung off the main road and before long came upon the brick wall.

"Here we are," she said abruptly. "It's up to you from now on!"

"Then let's turn the motor," he answered, coming back to earth again. "We may want to leave in a hurry."

She ran the car a few yards beyond the end of the wall, backed it, and left it headed in the direction whence they had come.

"What are you going to do?" she asked, as if whatever his reply might be she would be entirely satisfied.

"I don't know!" he confessed. "But I'm going to do something!"

The negro eyed them suspiciously through the wicket before opening the door, but admitted them. Clearly Doctor Dhal relied on forces more potent than prison-bars. Light poured from the windows of the Butterfly Club, but the veranda was empty and so were the adjacent corridors. A faint odor was noticeable. Was it incense—or cabbage? The negro left them in the reception-room, explaining that the members were at dinner. Glancing about at the banal cottage furniture and the cheaply finished woodwork, it struck the lawyer that the whole thing must be a joke. What he had heard was simply incredible.

They were kept waiting what seemed an interminable time. Maitland became first impatient, then irritated. He looked for a bell, but there was none. At length from a distance came the sound of chairs being moved, then of many footsteps. Dinner evidently was over. At the end of the corridor an irregular procession of figures began to pass. Maitland, who had no plan of campaign, found himself at a loss. Suppose they were simply left kicking their heels just where they were all the evening? He walked part way down the corridor to see what was going on. A large hall hung with brilliantly colored stuffs opened to the right. At one end was a platform faced by rows of chairs. Twenty or thirty people were already occupying them. Clearly some sort of evening entertainment was toward. The

incongruity of his presence—like that of a gentleman burglar—slightly amused him. Florian—in a scarlet dinner-jacket—obviously an effort at self-expression—passed along talking to a young girl. Sheila! Then Maitland became conscious of reality. The sight of the pursy artist with his chubby chin and little pointed beard infuriated him. He saw Florian lay his hand upon Sheila's shoulder; and could see her as if by instinct draw away from him.

Maitland stepped boldly into the room.

"Miss Kayne!" he called.

Engrossed in what Florian was saying, she did not at first hear him. But he was conscious that others in the room were gazing at him in surprise.

"Miss Kayne!" he repeated, approaching her.

Sheila turned, and every vestige of color left her face.

"I have come to take you home," he said simply, without noticing Florian.

Sheila put her hand to her breast.

"Who—sent—you?" she asked.

"Nobody—I came," he replied. "I want you to come with me."

Florian had not moved from where he had been standing. Sheila looked first at him, then at Maitland.

"I can't, Mr. Maitland!" she said. "Really, I can't!"

"Why, of course you can!" he insisted. "Do you mean you are afraid to leave?"

A troubled look crossed her face, into which the color was now slowly returning.

"Perhaps Miss Kayne means that it would not be courteous to Doctor Dhal to go away as you suggest," said Florian, looking at her fixedly.

"Miss Kayne will speak for herself!" retorted Mait-

land. He appealed to her once more. “May I have a few words with you alone—Sheila?”

At his use of her Christian name she lifted her face and he saw that her eyes were wet.

“Come to the reception-room!” he said, taking her by the arm and leading her toward the door. She followed willingly enough—but rather as in a trance. Over his shoulder Maitland could see Florian hurrying down the corridor in the direction of the dining-room. How young the child seemed in contrast with the other people in the bedlam lecture-hall, a majority of whom were elderly or middle-aged women! They reached the reception-room and Maitland pushed Sheila gently across the threshold in front of him, closing the door as Diana took her sister in her arms.

“Forgive me!” she begged. “I was horrid to you this morning!”

Sheila let Diana kiss her; then stepped back and threw a glance of inquiry at Maitland.

“Did you two come together?”

“Naturally,” he answered with a smile. “I couldn’t take you back to New York with me without a chaperon, could I? And, you see, you really can’t stay here, because your father is in trouble and needs you all to stand by him. He would not understand it if you didn’t want to go.”

“He never stood by *me!*” she retorted. “Neither he nor mama ever took any real interest in me! Everything that makes life really beautiful I’ve learned more from Doctor Dhal——”

“Doctor Dhal!” cried Diana fiercely. “That miserable sham!”

Sheila’s eyes flashed and she clenched her fists.

“He is nothing of the kind! He is very wise and

good." Her voice became thin and high. "He is 'all good.' I will not hear you say anything against my *guru!*"

She faced Maitland with clasped hands. "I will go with you if you really want me to," she said. "I will go because you ask me—for no other reason. I do not believe papa needs me at all. That is just a trick to get me away. But I don't mind if *you* ask me to go. Do you understand?"

"I do ask you!" Maitland assured her.

"Very well," she said. "I will come. But I must get my things. They are in the little house in the grove. I shall only be gone a minute."

She walked the few steps toward the door, but as she stretched out her hand to turn the knob it opened disclosing Doctor Dhal upon the threshold.

"What is this?" asked the Yogi.

"Miss Kayne has decided to return to New York with her sister," said Maitland sternly.

Doctor Dhal bowed.

"No one stays here against his will," he answered with a smile. "All are free to come and go as they will. How is it, my child—do you wish to leave your *guru?*"

He leaned toward her, looking into her eyes, still smiling, and his wreathed lips murmured some word in a foreign tongue.

Sheila faltered, smiling faintly in return.

"You do not wish to leave your *guru!*" he said in a harsh metallic tone quite different from his ordinary glutinous utterance. "You do not wish to go! You will not go!"

"I do not wish to go!" repeated Sheila mechanically.

"You see, she says herself she does not wish to go," smiled Dhal without taking his eyes from her face.

Maitland saw that he was losing ground.

“Sheila!” he said authoritatively, stepping between them. “I ask you to come with me. You said you would do so if I asked you. Come!”

He put his arm around her, and drawing her to him led her toward the door where stood the Yogi. The smile did not leave Dhal’s face, although a gleam flashed for an instant in his black eyes. Maitland could feel the malignity concealed beneath the saccharine curve of those sensuous lips.

“Wait a moment!” said Doctor Dhal.

He raised one of his short dangling arms, barring their passage with a pudgy open palm.

“Get out of the way!” ordered Maitland sharply.

“Sheila! Little one—” purred the Yogi, dropping his hand to the child’s shoulder.

With his full weight back of his fist Maitland drove for the pulpy face just where the parted lips showed a glint of white. It was a blow that would have felled a far tougher philosopher than Doctor Dhal. The Yogi’s head flew back, his knees gave way, and he pitched forward to the floor, where he lay motionless, a bizarre and grotesque figure, his arms flung wide like a gaudy doll.

Maitland had struck without full realization of his act or of its possible consequences. But the satisfaction he derived from the blow would have amply compensated him for a month in jail.

Sheila seized him convulsively by the arm and buried her face in his shoulder. Diana and he stared at the body on the floor as if they rather expected another Doctor Dhal to come floating sweetly out of a corner with a “Here you should look!” But nothing of that sort occurred. Apparently, if you hit him quick enough

and hard enough, you could dislocate Dhal's astral machinery.

The left foot in its crimson slipper twitched. An arm stirred; a stertorous sigh came from the swollen mouth. The omnipotent one was coming back from Nirvana or wherever he had been excursioning. From the other end of the corridor could be heard the echo of approaching voices. Maitland quickly snapped off the light in the reception-room and dragged Sheila into the hall. Mr. Oscar Florian's scarlet dinner-jacket flared close by. One of the women in bathing-suits followed just behind him.

"Have you spoken with Doctor Dhal?" demanded the artist.

"Yes," answered Diana. "I am taking my sister away."

Florian turned inquiringly to the young woman, who was evidently puzzled.

"I am afraid there must be some misunderstanding," she interposed, stepping forward. "Miss Kayne told me within less than ten minutes that she expected to remain at the club for at least a week."

"She can speak for herself," said Lloyd. "Are you coming with me, Sheila?"

The girl raised her head, but at the sight of Florian and his companion she turned away her face with a look of aversion.

"Yes," she whispered.

Without further parley, Maitland and Diana hurried Sheila down the hall to the veranda. As they stepped upon the gravel path the lights in the reception-room burst forth again. They could hear the frenzied ringing of an electric bell. Shadows, like huge bats, darted to and fro past the windows. There were muffled shouts.

“Run!” directed Maitland. “Let’s do a vanishing act ourselves!”

There was a key in the door in the wall and Maitland removed it, closed and locked the door behind them on the outside, and tossed the key into the bushes.

“And that’s that!” he remarked. “Don’t throw on your lights until we get farther down the road.”

Next instant they had glided off into the darkness, Diana at the wheel, Sheila and Lloyd upon the back seat. She was trembling, and after putting his coat over her shoulders he kept his arm about her. But she soon became calm and by the time they reached the highroad she was in her usual spirits. She would not permit Lloyd to remove his arm, however; it was more comfortable, she said.

The prosaic red and white lights in the drug-store windows at Flushing gave them all a sense of comfort. It was quite natural to Sheila to let her head rest on Lloyd’s shoulder, as she so often had in her dreams, and to find herself answering all his questions so unreservedly. Now that the Butterfly Club was miles behind them, her visit there seemed to have a curious quality of unreality—as if she had not herself experienced what had actually occurred but merely seen it depicted upon the screen.

Tactfully, and by degrees, Lloyd extracted from her what little there was to tell. She was sorry for Doctor Dhal, she said. He was really a well-meaning man; but of course once you got away from it the whole thing did seem rather silly. She had had a pleasant enough time. It was queer at first being called by your first name by a lot of strangers, but they were agreeable and friendly, and the only lecture she had listened to—“The Nature of Perfect Health”—had been quite in-

teresting. She had been given a room furnished in red and green because her physical examination had revealed the fact that her system needed certain tonic vibrations which these colors supplied. Perhaps it did, she didn't know. But Doctor Dhal was all right. There had not been the slightest need to worry about her. She was half asleep by the time they reached Queensboro Bridge, and when Diana pulled up at the curb in front of the house, the child seemed disinclined to get out. Before she did so Sheila lowered her head as if to look for something in the bottom of the car, caught Lloyd's hand and pressed it swiftly to her lips.

There were two closed motors already there, and Jarmon threw open the front door before they had reached the top of the steps. Two strangers were talking together in the front hall. The elevator stood open. A woman in street costume with a bag beside her sat near the foot of the stairs.

"Has anything happened, Jarmon?" asked Diana apprehensively.

"Your grandfather, miss. He had a stroke in the Park. He's upstairs in his room."

One of the strange men accosted them.

"Miss Kayne? I am Doctor Warren. Is your sister Sheila here? Your grandfather keeps asking for her—that is, so we understand him. Will you see that she goes to him at once?"

Diana half closed her eyes. The wainscoting seemed to sway.

"Oh, Lloyd! Lloyd!" she murmured. He took her hands.

"This is where *you're* needed!" he said.

"And where we all—I—need you too!" she answered feverishly. "Come, Sheila!"

They found Claudia upstairs sitting with Uncle Billy. The old man appeared stupefied by what had happened. The door to her grandfather's bedroom was open, light streaming from it.

The pirate lay on his cot, his shaggy white head slightly thrust forward by the extra pillow behind it, staring at the door. A nurse stood in the background. Their father was kneeling beside the bed in his business clothes. In a chair at the foot sat their mother in her best terra-cotta evening dress, and wearing her emerald stomacher and her diamond-and-emerald necklace and tiara. There was something noticeably unnatural in her grandfather's position. A shadow obscured the color of his face. Every moment or two he would make a spasmodic effort with his right arm and from his lips would issue an odd sibilation, a grotesque labial hissing.

The nurse saw them and stepped forward with a smile of professional encouragement. Their father lifted his head, but Diana could hardly recognize his face. Elizabeth had the strained look of the self-consciously sympathetic. She got up and motioned to Sheila.

“Here!” she said. “You take this!”

“Speak to him,” suggested the nurse.

Sheila, her hands clasped before her, drew near the foot of the bed.

“Grandpa!” she whispered, forcing back a sob. “It's me—Sheila.”

The eyes of the pirate widened, and he lifted his head the fraction of an inch. It could not be said that a light came into his face, but the lines of his forehead moved upward and the pathetic semblance of a smile twisted one cheek. He made an heroic effort to articulate but his tongue had lost its power.

“Th—th—ss——!”

Then his head sank to his chest and he gave vent to a long sigh of relief.

When half an hour later she came down-stairs, Diana found Lloyd waiting in the hall. To his glance of inquiry she said:

"He is quite helpless, poor old man! He may live as he is for some time. Conceivably he might make a partial recovery. But another shock would end it. It's terrible for father! It's killing him!"

"Come and let us get a bite to eat somewhere," he proposed, and he could see that the suggestion pleased her. They descended the steps just as the chauffeur was taking the car away.

"How lucky Sheila came with us!" she said as they walked along the avenue. "Grandfather knew her at once and it seemed to make him quite happy."

They were passing a street-light and she raised her eyes to him.

"Of course you know the reason she came back?"

He read the answer and hurriedly looked away.

"I never suspected," he answered in a gruff voice. "Poor kid!"

"But why?" she continued very softly. "She's so sweet! And she needs some one so!"

"No!" he replied. "It can't be! It's no use!! I'm sorry. But I've nothing to blame myself for!"

"Except for being you!" she said.

His heart was leaping, leaping! Was it possible that he had been wrong, misjudged her entirely all along?

"Oh, Lloyd, you can't guess how I've been worrying about her the last forty-eight hours. She's so innocent! So easily influenced. And now everything seems to be falling about our ears. If I could only feel that she was safe!"

“It can’t be!” he repeated, his brain awhirl. He was not going to find Diana merely to lose her! “It can’t be!”

They walked on nearly a block without speaking. Then she said:

“How strange that all these misfortunes should happen to us at once. If I believed in a God I should almost feel as if it were a judgment of some sort. If it weren’t for you, Lloyd, I don’t know what I should do.”

Again his heart leaped, forcing the blood to his eyes, his ears, his very fingertips!

“I need you, Lloyd!” she went on. “For I have no one else to turn to. I’ve never had any father of the ordinary kind at all. Church and all that sort of thing has never meant anything to me. I’ve never believed in a future existence of any sort. We’re born, we live, we die—and as far as I’m concerned that’s the end of it. I’ve never been able to satisfy myself that there’s any reason why any of us should accept the moral doctrines that are preached to us. We find ourselves here—that’s all! And usually it seems wiser to play the game according to the rules.”

She lowered her head and dropped her voice.

“Sometimes I’ve followed the rules and sometimes I haven’t. I have always been sorry—but for no reason that has seemed adequate.”

His heart stopped entirely. Obviously she was speaking of Devereaux! It was as if a lance had been thrust through his breast. Yet he knew that the pang was only lest she should still love Devereaux and not himself.

“At first it doesn’t seem to matter what you believe, because life is such fun anyway. You have the idea that nobody is really bad except in books; and that people are good as a matter of course. You imagine even if

you don't go any farther that honesty is, at least, really the best policy. And then you discover that in point of fact the world is full of all kinds of crookedness and that the people on top and often the most respected are apt to be the worst of all. You wonder what is the use of trying to be on the level yourself. You run into two poor souls like Claudia and Nigel and you realize that there isn't any justice in the world. And—and—sometimes you want to kill yourself!"

She spoke with an intensity that frightened him.

"You have never felt like that!" he challenged desperately.

"Indeed I have!" she answered. "With nothing to look forward to, why not? Most lives on their face aren't worth living. You know that! And sometimes it seems as if the game weren't worth the candle."

"Then why," he demanded, "are so many sure that it is? If life is nothing but 'dead sea fruit,' why are there so many people who are really happy?"

"Perhaps they aren't!" she replied. "Perhaps something has blinded—doped them. Perhaps in every case the man or woman who thinks he or she is happy is doped by success, or money, or fame, or popularity, or—something? If they die before it wears off, well and good; then perhaps they die happy. If they live too long, they just—for the most part—keep up a pretense."

"But haven't you been happy?" he asked in surprise. "I certainly always thought of you as that!"

"Oh, Lloyd!" she answered sadly, "if you only knew!"

"Then you were never doped by money or popularity?"

"For a year or two perhaps—not any longer. You see now why I need your help—your encouragement.

I'm the only one of the family that isn't in some sort of trouble. I've got to piece things out if I can. And somehow I feel as if I were entirely alone. I've got nothing really to go by. I don't say [I'm an absolute cynic; but only that, so far as I can see, there's no logical answer to the cynic's argument of 'what's the use?' I don't know of any reason for being honest or decent or sincere. That's what makes everything so hopeless!”

“Why do you tell me this?” he asked suddenly.

“Because it's only fair that you should know—if I am asking your friendship.”

He began laughing excitedly.

“But, Diana!” he cried, pulling her around so that she faced him. “Don't you see—hang it all!—that you've answered the question yourself? The reason you do the things you ought to do is because you must do them if you want to be happy. And you always know what it is, every time!—or pretty nearly every time,” he qualified himself.

“Conscience?”

“That's what I call it.”

“But I don't believe in conscience!”

“Call it anything you like, then.”

“Conscience didn't make me want to tell you about myself.”

“But something did!”

She twisted away from him, but he caught her by the arm.

“Diana! Why tell me the truth if you don't believe in it? It's because you do believe in it! Because it's part of you and you're always true to yourself. You couldn't be anything else! You may think you don't believe in anything; and refuse to admit that you've got any religion. But all the time you know that you're

part of the whole big scheme, and recognize it by what you call 'playing the game' and 'being a sport.' I'd rather have your instinct than my conscience, all confused as it is with law and ethics and inherited conventions. Oh, Diana, you are just as you look! You think you are cynical and materialistic but you're not—you're generous and true—and—and beautiful!"

"No! No!" she protested.

"Diana!" he cried, "I love you! I love you!—I love you!"

They were passing a flight of steps and he led her into the shadow. A policeman eyed them suspiciously. Maitland took her by both shoulders. She lifted her face to his, her eyes closed.

"I love! I love you!" he repeated tremulously. "You're everything there is for me in life! I've always loved you! You're the most wonderful, astounding person in the world for me! I can't go on without you! You must have known it! Of course you knew it. Why did you try to get me to say I cared for Sheila! When I love you—only you—never any one else! Diana! Say you love me! Say it!—Say it!"

"Oh, Lloyd! Lloyd!" was all she said.

He was kissing her now, holding her head in his two hands, and her tears were slipping warm across his fingers. He brushed them away with his lips.

"Anyhow, say you need me!" he whispered.

"I—*love*—you!" she answered, holding her cheek to his.

So they stood on the sidewalk of Fifth Avenue—yet in paradise.

"Quick! Let me go! That policeman is coming across the street!" she said.

He felt like a giddy fool, as, tightly holding her hand,

they continued without consciousness of effort or of direction along the thoroughfare.

“And I always thought—was sure you were in love with Larry. Are you quite positive that you were not?”

“Quite!” she answered. “I liked him tremendously but I never was the least little bit in love with him. I never was in love before. One can’t mistake it, you know!” And then she added, glancing up at him with a little husky laugh: “I may be ‘doped’—but I’m happy!”

CHAPTER XXXI

"BABYLON IS FALLEN, IS FALLEN"

A RED flag drooped—flapping intermittently—from an oaken pole protruding from one of the lower windows of the Kayne house. The bunting itself had seen hard service, the pole was stained and battered, but the cords that laced it in place were white and new and, as if to allay possible apprehension on the part of passers-by who might otherwise have inferred the presence of scarlet fever or something else contagious, it bore in large dirty letters the word "AUCTION."

It was the hour when Rufus Kayne usually made his appearance at the head of the brownstone steps, deferentially followed by Jarmon, and descended buttoning his gloves to his waiting motor. But on this particular morning his place was occupied by a colored boy in green livery, wearing a pill-box cap marked "Peterman" in gold letters.

The colored boy, leaning against the iron grill of the open door, regarded the pedestrians below with hauteur. Until Mr. Burleigh should arrive—which would not be until precisely one minute before ten o'clock—he was in charge, and he was full of the insolence of office. No other human being so feels the pride of complete authority, of absolute possession, as an auctioneer, unless it be a caterer or an undertaker. Most of the walkers, whose business allowed them to do so, had sought the shade of the opposite side of the street. The colored boy, however, invited the sun's full onslaught.

Spring had burst the invisible bonds forged secretly

by winter, and in an unrestrained paroxysm of relief had scattered its evidences everywhere up and down the avenue like confetti after a carnival. The sporadic buttonwoods and maples in their wire corsets at the curb's edge were showered with reddish leafy buds, like flights of tiny butterflies; there was grass behind some of the iron fences and brownstone balustrades; and a multitude of small worms had pushed up from their subterranean homes beneath the flags and were sprawling in an abandoned manner in public view. And on the ledges of the Kayne house bloomed window-boxes full of geraniums, heliotrope, crocuses, and yellow cowslips, since nobody had warned the florist that his semi-annual visit was to be unnecessary that spring.

There was certainly something incongruous in this tax on permanency, this last touch of personal luxury and elegance, and the huge canvas sign suspended between those flower-decked windows, reading:

To Be Sold
**THIS MAGNIFICENT PRIVATE
RESIDENCE**
At
AUCTION
on Friday, May 19th, 1922
at 10 o'clock
together with all
FURNISHINGS and OBJECTS OF ART.
The Peterman Galleries
T. Burleigh, Auctioneer.

For two weeks now the pirate had hovered between life and death upon the upper floor. In the excitement

attendant upon the old man's collapse no one had had time to think of business matters and the preparations for the auction had gone on until it was too late—at any rate, Mr. Burleigh said it was too late—to cancel them. After all, the house and contents had to be sold. Simply because the family were still in occupancy made no particular difference—they could eat in the library. Rufus, overwhelmed by the calamity to his father, let him have his way.

The old man had hardly stirred since they had laid him upon his narrow cot—the hard, narrow cot that he so preferred to Miss Lamb's box springs. They knew that he was probably dying, and by virtue of that fact he regained for the time being in their imaginations all his colossal proportions. The head of the house, the founder of the family, the giant—was dying! They thought no more of him as a gentle, feeble octogenarian—a sort of living relic of former days miraculously preserved. That phase was over. The frail body that lay motionless in that silent room harbored the soul of a great man, a hero, a pioneer—and they thought only of that great soul. He had come back. Once more he dominated their minds, their very bodies, seeming to pervade all the rooms and to stand at the head of the stairs.

Just as their steps inevitably led them to his door, so their thoughts centred ceaselessly about his bed. Rufus left the room only for his meals. He was dazed, dumfounded by his own grief. Nothing else had touched him. He could imagine life without the trust company, without Elizabeth, without any of his children—but not without the pirate. He knew that the pirate's room was the only church in which he had ever really worshipped. And now the shrine would soon be empty

—the candles upon the altar extinguished. The doctor would come like a sexton, close the door and—shut him out. Anxiously he watched his father's set face—watched until his eyelids were weary and his eyeballs ached, watched until he seemed to be in the same sort of trance as that in which the old man lay.

The girls spent much of their time there too—sitting in the adjoining room near Uncle Billy McGaw, who fumbled ceaselessly over the cabinet—sorting out, arranging, and rearranging the specimens. Uncle Billy had been acting very queerly ever since the pirate's stroke, and at times seemed to have entirely forgotten where he was, muttering to himself as he examined caressingly some sparkling bit of quartz, holding it to the light, patting it and at length laying it down tenderly in the place selected for it.

"This here," he might say dreamily to Claudia, "this here sure looks good to me! Tom Sisson brought it in from Jawbone Canyon the other day. Says there's a streak runs clear down through to Chiny! Wants three thousand for it—but he'd work it on shares, I reckon. I dunno—I'm goin' to get the boss to look it over some day!"

Then perhaps he would pick up some other one equally enticing.

"Now jest look at that! You kin see gold all over it. Gold everywheres. That one came out of that old shaft over by Forty-two. We oughter do somethin' about that right away!"

James had, of course, been most attentive, calling daily with Edna and Rachel; and Bridget, suddenly telegraphed for, had left the dyspeptic Mallory, her husband, at Atlantic City, and with Cynthia had taken up a temporary residence at the St. Regis in order to be

close by. Everybody had been very kind and the front hall had been kept full of flowers, for which Diana wrote the letters of acknowledgment, besides taking over the entire management of the house, Elizabeth having proved unequal to the emergency.

It was astonishing how many people for the first time in years had suddenly remembered the pirate's existence. Somebody's motor was always in front of the door; some chauffeur always running up the steps with a box or note or card; and twice Mr. Pepperill had called punctiliously—and had enjoined upon Jarmon to express to the family his deep regret, his very deep regret, at the most distressing news.

But, although they all made a pretense of being cheerful and of believing that the pirate would get well, they knew in their hearts that he would never leave his room again.

Still, on the morning of the auction Doctor Follansbee, who had been in faithful attendance, said that the old man really seemed better. He could detect a slight return of muscular power in the leg and arm. The nurse might even use her discretion about letting him sit up for a while in the armchair. It was possible that it would do him good. But they must watch him and not let him make any undue effort. For the present they could let him go to sleep again.

So while the colored boy in his pill-box cap lounged below in the sunshine smoking his cigarette, and waiting for his master to come and knock the house down to the highest bidder, the man who had built it lay up-stairs ignorant of all that had happened. So far as old Peter knew, the house of Kayne might last forever. Rufus, sitting beside the bed with his hand thrust beneath that of his father, was struck by the dignity of the old man's

profile as he slept, the nobility of the marble forehead as it rose from the aureole of untrimmed hair and beard in which it was framed. There was in the face an austere and august stateliness.

Gently, so very gently as hardly to be noticeable, the sheet upon the pirate's breast rose and fell. The room itself was still except when Rufus changed his position or the nurse tiptoed behind the bed. Through the open window came faintly from below the sound of a hurdy-gurdy playing "My Country, 'tis of thee." Two sparrows lit upon the adjacent sill, twittered, cocked their heads at Rufus, and darted off again. Far up in the blue there could be heard the drone of an aeroplane. The fragrance of the air from outside was tinctured with an odor of medicines. Now and again there came from the distance the dimmed rattle and roar of an elevated train. Rufus, sitting there motionless, never shifted his glance from his father's face.

The pirate thought he heard a fly buzzing and awoke. It annoyed him that there should be a fly in his room. He was feeling much stronger; could even stir his right arm and foot a little, and his soup had tasted good to him. The nurse thought him a very dear old fellow, although a bit irritable. He objected to flies, and there was a bell—a doleful bell—tolling! All his senses were alert. He had not suffered; he was not suffering now. It was only that strange numbness of his left side—a touch of sun in the Park the doctor had said. He'd be all right. Well, it had been worth it! Those children! How they had enjoyed it! He mustn't be cross! And Sheila had come back. She was over by the window looking up into the air.

"An aeroplane, grandpa!" she said. "Right up there!"

He followed her glance, but his eyes could not get beyond the frame of the window in which she stood. Not a fly, then. That was good! The sound of the plane—a rumbling roar that waxed and waned and waxed again—filled the room, drowning out the tolling of the bell. He forgot the bell in marvelling at the plane. It was a wonder what men had succeeded in doing! Perhaps some day he'd muster courage enough to go up in one—with Rufus. The clatter of the plane filled the room. It made him angry. He stirred and uttered a sound of feeble protest.

"Yes, father! I'm here!" answered Rufus.

Sheila came from the window.

"What is it, grandpa, dear?" she asked, standing at the foot of the bed.

"I want to get up!"

They were startled. It was the first time that he had articulated normally since he had been stricken, and his voice seemed like a voice from the tomb. Yet his appearance was reassuring.

Surely there was a tinge of color in those waxen cheeks! Could it be that the old vitality had triumphed? That the fighting spirit which in the past had overborne all his competitors was now to vanquish his last and greatest enemy for another round?

The nurse hurried forward from the corner.

"If he wants to!" she said. "The doctor suggested it himself. This lying in bed is so weakening!"

She turned down the sheet and Rufus winced at the sight of the old man's emaciated form, the tubular hollows between the cords of his neck, the shrunken shoulders seen through the linen nightgown. With care they put their arms about him, and Rufus could feel the astonishing protuberance of his spine. Each muscle,

each bone, each organ had an amazing separate individuality. The shrivelled body filled Rufus with acute compassion. Contrasted with the size of his face the white mustache looked enormous—terrific. Slowly they raised him to a sitting posture and lifted his thin old legs over the side of the bed. Tears were in Rufus's eyes as he knelt down and put his father's feet into his slippers.

Then the nurse thrust his arms through the wide-flowing sleeves of his dressing-gown, and unassisted transferred the wasted body to the invalid chair, stuffing pillows about it for support.

"Fine!" said the pirate, highly excited by so great an adventure. "I'm—going—to get—well! You'll see—Sheila!"

It was half past nine as Maitland approached the Kayne house. There was to be a military funeral at the Cathedral that morning, and as a member of the Legion's local post he had put on his uniform for the first time since returning from overseas. Although it had been freshly cleaned and pressed it still bore many marks of service. How strange to be walking up Fifth Avenue in a uniform which he had worn within sound of German guns. How much more natural, after all, it was to be in khaki than in mufti! How familiar the old belt, the baggy breeches, the scratched and wrinkled gaiters!

He had thought constantly of Dorman ever since the news of the latter's suicide had been made public. A brave soldier, a loyal friend, a good fellow, a chivalrous spirit! One of the heroes of the war! Their regiments had struggled side by side through the ravines of the Argonne! His mind refused to grasp the fact that

Dorman was dead—and by his own hand. He had seen him only recently at the Players, and he now recalled that he had seemed discouraged over his lack of success in finding work for the partially disabled survivors of his regiment.

So Dorman was dead! He could make light of hunger, thirst, cold, and lack of sleep, the interminable pounding of artillery, the torture of the gas-mask—could lead his men grinning cheerfully into a hornet's nest of machine-guns, face death a hundred times a day, and then sit up all night with his arm about a dying dough-boy, but he couldn't stand the harrowing appeals of those same men for help when they had dragged their shattered bodies back to the lonely farms or overflowing city tenements whence they had come. He could suffer himself—but he couldn't stand watching their suffering. His nerves had buckled under the strain. His poor brain had cracked. Another gallant lad gone West!

Poor Dorman! Past him in an uninterrupted succession rolled the line of limousines carrying their sleek occupants down-town to—business. "Business as usual!" Plate-glass windows on every hand exhibited flower-gardens of women's spring hats. As usual! Everywhere the pandering to pleasure and to extravagance! As usual!

He paused on the corner opposite the house. It wore an unfamiliar look, as if its mouth and eyes were opened in surprise at what was going on; and the white auction sign affixed to the front had the appearance of an artificial nose stuck on to complete the resemblance to a face. He stood and looked at it. So it was going! Just as the Kaynes were going. Such houses—such families—came and went—with hardly anybody the wiser! Monuments to the inconsequentiality of human life!

He crossed the street, ascended the steps, and entered the front hall, where the auction was to take place. It had an air of being swept and garnished, looking gloomier than ever with its rows of folding chairs and runners of red paper laid between. The Sèvres vases had not been moved, but the palms had been shoved together into one corner, revealing all the charms of the Greek slave, and one of the big tables had been swung around crossways at the foot of the organ. Upon it had been placed a huge pile of catalogues, done in the accustomed style of the Peterman Galleries, a pitcher of ice-water and a tumbler. Nothing else in the hall had been changed.

There were a score of people already seated or wandering around examining the *objets d'art*, and more were coming in at the doorway every moment, bringing with them an odor of cigars reluctantly discarded upon the topmost steps. These earlier arrivals were for the most part seedy-looking men, among whom was a scattering of sharp-featured, capable women—obviously professionals, second-hand dealers, who made a business of buying to sell again, bargain-hunters, knowing to a dollar the market value of household goods. Some of them were in the employ of hotels who found it cheaper to buy thus than from the wholesalers; others belonged to the great brotherhood for whom an auction savors of all the excitement of a lottery; others again—of curiosity-seekers—were drifted in because the door was open and presently would drift out again.

What were they doing there, these strangers? Were they lost to all sense of decency that they could thus swarm through another's house, straggling through the apartments, fingering the rugs and window-curtains, tracking up the stairways, examining the pictures and

china, prying into the closets, and opening the piano? The soul of the house was being violated; its sentiment, its atmosphere defiled! Who was it thus dared to expose to public view the private precincts hitherto occupied by the Kaynes? By what right did these men come invading it with their signs and red flags, their colored boys and catalogues, their camp-chairs and moving-vans? It was shocking to expose these intimate possessions of the family sacred to them by long association!

Here they had dwelt—four generations of them—sheltered from public view in what the law had said was their castle. Here Rufus had brought his young wife and entertained their friends. Here his children had been born. Here they had passed their girlhood. Here Claudia had been married with the organ pealing out the wedding-march and the hall crowded with uniforms. Here Elizabeth had lived her life, such as it was, and gathered her fat friends about her. Here the old pirate had climbed—before the elevator—to his room on Uncle Billy's arm. Here, in the earlier days, at least, there had taken place family quarrels and conclaves, childish tears, confessions and repentances, whispered avowals and laughing protests, sad goings-away and gay home-comings—and up those stairs no longer than two weeks ago the stricken form of the old pirate had been carried to the room where now he lay.

With what care and study—no matter what the taste exercised—each of the pieces of furniture had been chosen! What an event the purchase of the tapestries! No room, no passage, no landing, no stair, no square foot of floor space that was not crowded with memory, peopled by the ghosts of former years!

The crowd behind shoved Maitland along and he

made his way through the hall and ascended to the second story, where he encountered Jarmon coming from Mrs. Kayne's room with her breakfast-tray in his hands. From him Lloyd learned that the old gentleman seemed to be somewhat better and that Miss Diana had gone out. Colonel Maitland didn't 'appen to know of anybody lookin' for an hexperienced man servant, did 'e? Jarmon himself explained that he had just given notice. Rats and sinking ships!

Lloyd descended to the landing on the mezzanine floor and paused, surveying the hall below. The visitors were coming in now in a steady stream, each at the door receiving one of the circulars, then working around among the chairs for an advantageous place, after furtively removing a catalogue from the pile upon the table as if fearful of being asked to pay for it. The avenue outside was blocked with motors, and a black man in maroon livery with a tall hat and cockade had mysteriously appeared and was opening the doors in the grandest possible manner. The Kayne auction had begun to take on the flavor of a society function.

Squarely implanted in the middle of the second row Lloyd could see the robust figure of Mrs. Brice-Brewster in a coquettish straw hat fringed with spears of wheat. She was evidently expecting somebody, for she had carefully spread a portion of her purple pongee skirt over a part of the chair beside her and had placed a plump white-gloved hand in the middle of the seat. Senator Krass, a vacant expression upon his long pink face, his tall figure arrayed in a gray cutaway suit and wearing a gray derby hat with a black band, made his way toward the front followed anxiously by his small wife like a dog at heel. He indicated a seat in the front row, removed his hat with solemnity, reached for

a catalogue, and sank down beside her. In the centre of the room sat Mrs. Wingate in a tan-colored toque with a silver tassel, and beside her Rita Ricardo, to whom, evidently, Doctor Dhal had extended a half-holiday. Most of the chairs were taken by this time, and a line of standees had formed on the side next the staircase. In one of the front windows he could see Darcy and Longwood, and wondered what they could be doing there. A couple of hundred women formed a solid phalanx in the middle of the hall. It was like an afternoon tea.

The same old crowd—drawn by curiosity, cupidity, or by the desire to experience that satisfaction which La Rochefoucauld so cynically asserts the best of us derive from the misfortunes of our friends. This tragedy of success was nothing to any of them. With the exception of a few dull souls who, like Emily Brice-Brewster, had a sincere if mild affection for Elizabeth, none of these people cared two straws for the Kaynes or what became of them. Most of them actually disliked Rufus and disapproved of his children—were glad of the opportunity to say “I told you so!” At best those assembled were there on business, coldly indifferent to the misfortunes of the owner which now offered them their present entertainment and financial opportunity.

The delicate figure of Mr. Pepperill appeared picking his way through the crowd and casting about for Mrs. Brice-Brewster, who tried to attract his attention by anxiously waving at him. Impatience manifested itself—by a rustling of programmes. The colored boy, abandoning the doorway in obedience to some inaudible instruction, approached the table and passed catalogues to those who had been too shy to take them. Then he produced a small table from behind the organ and car-

ried it up the four steps to the landing on the stairway, which made a half-turn at this point before following the wainscoting to the mezzanine. Upon the table he placed the pitcher of ice-water, the tumbler, and one of the catalogues. Evidently this was to be the rostrum from which the sale was to take place. Last he carried up a chair. The crowd watched his movements with tense expectancy. A broad-shouldered young man with a high-arched nose and faun-shaped ears whispered something to the boy, who thereupon retired beneath the staircase.

Maitland glanced at his watch. It was one minute to ten. He looked about him for a place where he could comfortably see and hear all that went on, self-consciously aware that his uniform made him too conspicuous to go downstairs. He was vitally interested in the price which the house itself might bring, since upon the success of the sale depended his future father-in-law's ability to meet his obligations. There was no “upset” price; it was to go for what it would fetch, and the auction might be a fiasco.

The mezzanine gallery ran entirely around the wall, and he stepped into it and sat down on a bench over the organ. On his left hung the three great Flemish tapestries purchased by old Peter thirty years before for forty thousand dollars—to cover up Howlett's original scheme of decoration which Elizabeth had regarded as too commonplace—crude in taste, yet sufficiently expensive to satisfy the æsthetic standards of their original purchaser. So, after elaborately disingenuous apologies to the architect, they had superseded the elaborate Gothic carvings and the gilded “Domus” and had hung there ever since—subject to an occasional “rejuvenation” by Miss Lamb: huge affairs eighteen feet by twenty-two

and correspondingly heavy; supported by a few brass hooks on a gilded moulding and entirely covering the westerly side of the hall, including the cornice. On the one nearest was depicted an amorous, or possibly merely amiable, group of Olympians quaffing goblets of nectar amid the clouds, their muscular arms about one another's pillar-like necks—undoubtedly the best people of their time.

At that instant, as foreordained, Mr. Burleigh made his entrance, pushing authoritatively through the crowd about the threshold. The vital moment had at last arrived. In spite of himself Maitland experienced a choking of excitement. Mr. Burleigh—short, abdominal, with a gray beard, and horn-rimmed glasses over his watery blue eyes, a carnation in his buttonhole and a tiny pair of golden antlers pinned just below it—strode past the rows of chairs with the air of a benign autocrat. For thirty years he had been the popular auctioneer of the metropolis. He was the master of ceremonies—the whole show—they could not get on without him. He knew who everybody was, who meant business and who was there merely for the fun of it. Moreover, he knew everybody who was buying for somebody else. But knowing these things did not affect his detachment. It was nothing to him what price anything brought or who bought it. It was his business to sell to the highest bidder whatever was offered; and he would sell with like indifference a rug, a picture, a bassinet, a statue, or a rolling-pin. Had he lived prior to 1861 he would, with equal nonchalance, have sold slaves.

There was that about Mr. Burleigh which made Maitland shiver. Was it possible that the man was entirely destitute of feeling? The little auctioneer stepped briskly up to the landing, nodding here and there at

various familiar faces among the crowd as he laid down his straw hat and glanced critically about him. The assistant seated himself on a corner of the large table below and began sharpening a pencil. The audience rustled itself to silence. Mr. Burleigh poured out a glass of ice-water and took a sip.

"I'll sell the house first," said he in a mild but penetrating voice. That was all: "I'll sell the house first." With no more ceremony than that did he open the obsequies of this palatial brownstone edifice. He was no barker—no mountebank, although he knew his business.

"The house itself is, of course, worth nothing," he continued. "But the land—the possibilities of this location—are immensely valuable. It is undoubtedly one of the best sites in the city."

Worth nothing? Lucky that old Peter Kayne, lying on the top story, could not hear him! Worth nothing? Had it not cost with its furniture a million dollars? Did Burleigh imagine that a million-dollar house would deteriorate in forty years so as to be valueless? Did he not know that that house had been built to last? That it was the best house of its time? That Howlett—the justly celebrated Howlett—up there on the roof—had designed it? That its beams and rafters were of the best seasoned lumber, its brownstone chiselled from a special quarry, each brick hand-pressed and baked, its foundations excavated to the solid rock, its floors sound-proof, its walls of double thickness—a mansion, a castle, a citadel, a stronghold, a fortress! Worth nothing? Maitland imagined the walls quivering with mortification, the floors trembling with indignation. Worth nothing? A lot he knew! Lucky old Howlett was firmly fastened to the roof! Worth nothing? Worth nothing!

Maitland no longer heard what Burleigh was saying. Could it be true that it was worth nothing? The house of Kayne worth nothing? He looked over the rail behind which he was concealed. Directly below him, in the second row beside Mrs. Brice-Brewster, was his partner, Mr. Vincent Pepperill, nodding at the remarks of the auctioneer. He recalled vividly what the old gentleman had said the first time he had deigned to discuss the Kaynes—stigmatizing them as materialists—all the more significantly for that he was one himself—had intimated that they worshipped the golden calf of wealth, place, and fashion—that they lived “by bread alone.” Had not he been right? And was not Burleigh right—although in a different sense? Was the house worth anything? Did it not stand for selfishness and hypocrisy, for greed and luxury, for worldliness? He had seen those figures on the roof!—had Howlett, with his keen insight into men, known what would happen to the Kaynes?—to this “house made with hands”? Had not Howlett known that the house was ugly and that the period was ugly—the period of plush furniture and the Albert Memorial? Hadn’t he simply given old Peter Kayne what he wanted? And did not the physical ugliness of the period symbolize, in a way, the sordidness of its ideals? Was it worth anything? On the whole, wouldn’t it be a good thing to tear the hideous old thing down—with all its decorations and furnishings—to give place to something better?

Mr. Burleigh was announcing the terms and conditions of sale—twenty-five thousand dollars down—balance in fifteen days. Maitland, stretching his spurred and booted legs, became conscious again of being in uniform. In a few minutes he would be following Dorman’s coffin up the aisle of the Cathedral.

"Boom!"

Already the bell had begun to toll. It trembled in the organ-pipes and the shudder in the air took him back to the Argonne. It was like the detonation of a German heavy: like those on that misty morning after the Boche had felt them out and got the range, when the two regiments had received the order to advance, and he had talked to Dorman over the field-telephone and they had wished each other luck. Had that been for nothing? Was it all for nothing?

"Boom!" He must go—go to Dorman!

What was Burleigh saying? "Seven hundred thousand"? Ha-ha! He and the faun-eared assistant were laughing at such an offer! Some one had bid seven hundred and twenty-five!

The floor creaked. A hand fell lightly on his shoulder. A kiss brushed his cheek. Diana! He seized her hand, drew her down beside him on the bench, and touched his lips to her forehead and hair.

"Grandfather's better!" she whispered. "He's quite wonderful this morning! The doctor has let him sit up in the armchair. But if he should get well, he'd be frightfully upset about the house. Poor old house!"

Maitland held her to him without reply.

"And—have you heard?—father's got a new job? A very good one—as vice-president of a national bank. Mr. Graham found it for him?"

"Splendid!" he answered.

"Why are you in uniform?" she asked suddenly. "I like you in it!"

"I'm going to a military funeral," he answered. "You can hear the bell."

"Whose funeral?"

“‘Chuck’ Dorman’s—we were together on the other side.”

She shivered and drew closer. He looked at his watch. Ten minutes yet.

Burleigh’s rasping voice rose from the floor below punctuated by the tolling bell.

“Seven hundred and thirty thousand? Giving it away, I tell you! Do I hear the five? Thank you! Do I hear forty? Forty—forty—forty? Thank you! And five?—it’s your bid, sir. Thank you. Seven hundred and forty-five thousand dollars! Do I hear the fifty? Fifty—fifty—fifty? Do I hear the fifty?”

The bidding had centred between two men in the front row, and the audience was pressing forward the better to see and hear what was going on. Mr. Burleigh leaned over the banister and looked inquiringly at a snuffy little man next the aisle. The little man nodded almost imperceptibly.

“And fifty!” ejaculated Mr. Burleigh, and the crowd exhaled with relief.

“Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars! Do I hear the five? Going at seven hundred and fifty. Fifty-five—fifty-five—fifty-five? Do I hear the five?” He looked at the opposing bidder, who shook his head and reached for his hat.

“Boom!” went the Cathedral bell.

“Going at seven hundred and fifty thousand!” intoned Mr. Burleigh in the same key.

The pirate sat in his chair, his arms extended, his shaggy head protruding from the pillows, like that of some lawgiver of old. Rufus had gone down-town to finish up his business at the trust company, and Sheila had taken out Uncle Billy for a walk. The nurse, hop-

ing that her patient would go to sleep again, had stepped into the next room and, leaving the door open between, was reading a detective story. But the pirate could not go to sleep, and he did not want to. All his irritation had disappeared. It was not right to be fussy when they were all so kind.

The aeroplane had passed over the house and the sound of it was dying away—nothing but a hum, or was it a fly, after all? There was no other sound save the faint strains of the hurdy-gurdy, its tune hardly distinguishable, and the bell, which seemed to be always tolling. The air was sweet—sweet. The pirate could feel new strength stealing into his veins. He could not fail to respond to the influence of the spring outside, to the love in those hearts near by. A rheumy tear gathered in the corner of his eye and slid gently along the furrow between his nose and his right cheek. Yes, he was going to get well! More of life! The thought filled him with painful gladness. The numbness that had made his left side feel like lead was almost gone.

And now, through the door left open by the nurse, there came to his ears a sound like that of a distant talking-machine. It rose and fell, paused and began again—a curious noise to be in a private house, as if somebody were delivering a lecture down-stairs. He stood it patiently for a while, although it bothered him. Yes, somebody was talking in an exasperatingly loud nasal tone. His irritation returned. Why couldn't they keep the house quiet! Where was the nurse? Why had she left the door open? He called her name, but at that moment she had gone down to the pantry for a glass of milk. Angry at his failure to get any response, the pirate pushed off the coverlet from his knees and stood miraculously up. The effort did not inconvenience him

and he took a step toward the door, intending to close it to keep out the noise. He seemed to be able to walk as well as ever!

He paused with his hand on the door-jamb and listened. From where he stood the whole house seemed full of strange squeaks and murmurs, whisperings and rustlings, broken by the singsong shouting of the voice which floated up from the front hall. What was going on down there? Strange people had intruded into his house. Who could they be? He must see about that!

Shakily, with his hand upon the banister, the pirate felt his way down the stairs. The noises grew louder with each step of his descent; and his anger grew proportionately. Who was making all that fuss in his house? He reached the third landing and started down toward the second, just below which led off the gallery of the mezzanine. The noise that now filled the house was like that of the sea crashing upon the rocks. Above the thunder of the surf he could hear the tolling of a bell-buoy. Some one was shouting to him, but the waves drowned the voice so that he could not distinguish what it was saying. Clang! went the knell of the buoy. Clang! It was bewildering having the sea come into your house. He hoped Sheila was safe! and Rufus! He was on the second landing now, and the roar of the breakers in the entrance-hall was like thunder in his ears. He would not go down there. He would but go into the gallery and peek over to see what was happening.

“Going at seven hundred and fifty thousand!” Mr. Burleigh was chanting down below. “Do I hear the five? —fifty-five—fifty-five—fifty-five? It’s being thrown away, I tell you! Thrown away! For the last time—

going at seven hundred and fifty thousand! Going once! Going twice!" He raised his pencil and looked round the hall. "Going three times!" He brought the end of the pencil down with a smart tap.

"Sold! To the Goethals-Schwenken Company for seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars!"

There was a general murmur of relief and a shuffling of feet. Mr. Burleigh poured out a glass of water and drank it slowly. Half a dozen people got up and went out.

"And now," continued the auctioneer, picking up the catalogue and opening it at the first page, "we will dispose of the furniture and *objets d'art*. I will begin with the three tapestries hanging on your right. Number One. Very rare allegorical eighteenth-century Flemish—eighteen by twenty-two. Buyer to have option of purchasing either or both of the others at same price."

The spectators resettled themselves, turning with one accord toward the corner by the organ where hung the Olympians.

"These tapestries, ladies and gentlemen, are museum pieces and should bring a handsome figure. They were bought in Europe for Mr. Peter Kayne at the time the house was built. I may say they were the talk of New York."

At this Senator Krass arose and, putting on his eyeglasses, examined the fabric with the air of a connoisseur.

"I hope you can all see, ladies and gentlemen?" said Mr. Burleigh. "It would be a shame to have these tapestries sold without a full appreciation of their artistic value."

He looked around at his assistant.

"Do you mind throwing on those lights, Mr. Wolf?"

The faun-eared man pressed a button near the organ

and a glare of electricity illuminated the top of the wainscoting.

"That's better!" said Mr. Burleigh. He beckoned to the negro. "Now, Jo, just lift up the corner of Number One—yes, that next to the organ—so the ladies and gentlemen back there can see the design."

Diana and Maitland, from the gallery above, watched the boy walk across in front of the first row of chairs, past Senator Krass, past Mr. Pepperill and Mrs. Brice-Brewster, bend over and take the corner of the tapestry in his hands. Many of the audience moved forward to get a better view. There was going to be a chance for everybody to pick up a bargain.

"Boom!"

The Cathedral bell had begun again. The "minute-bell" for the dead.

Suddenly Maitland felt Diana's clasp tighten.

"Look!" she gasped. "Look!"

At the other end of the mezzanine, but twenty feet from where they sat, under the full glare of the electricity, stood the patriarchal figure of her grandfather in his dressing-gown, gazing down upon the throng. His face wore a puzzled look, but his figure in its flowing garment had an austere and rugged grandeur. For an instant only did he stand there. Before either Diana or Maitland could stir to help him, they saw his left hand clutch the tapestry at his side, his body stiffen and collapse backward into the gallery.

The tug on the tapestry loosened one corner from its fastenings. The group of Olympians sagged sideways. A hook leaped singing into the air over the heads of the audience. The moulding cracked ominously.

"Look out!" cried a voice. "It's going to fall!"

"Boom!" came from the Cathedral.

There was a frenzied rush on the part of the spectators to get clear. Two or three women screamed. Chairs were overturned. With a loud report the tapestry ripped the moulding from the wall and fell upon the floor in a crumpled heap.

There was a momentary hush. A cloud of dust rose toward the mezzanine, slowly settling again, while the startled onlookers gradually regained their composure. There burst forth a confused hubbub of ejaculation, jocularity, laughter, followed by silence as their eyes turned to where the tapestry had hung. Upon the wainscoting beneath, totally forgotten and now revealed for the first time since it had been carved there forty years before, appeared the inscription:

**"Except the Lord build the house
they labor in vain that build it."**

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